

Message

From: Deegan, Dave [Deegan.Dave@epa.gov]
Sent: 5/16/2018 8:39:17 PM
To: R1 Executives All [R1ExecutivesALL@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: News Clips - 16 May 2018

From: Hassell, Emily
Sent: Wednesday, May 16, 2018 4:39:10 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: AO OPA OMR CLIPS
Subject: News Clips - 16 May 2018

(Full stories, highlights, and details are listed further down in the email, and can be jumped to by clicking on any of the links below.)

Administrator Pruitt on Capitol Hill

[Daily Caller - Scott Pruitt Survived His Third Capitol Hill Grilling In A Month](#)

[Politico - Pruitt says meeting victims' families moved him to push for chemical ban](#)

[Washington Examiner - Scott Pruitt: 'Fishy' trip to Morocco a 'mischaracterization'](#)

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[AP - The Latest: Pruitt denies aide shopped bad press about Zinke](#)

[The Hill - Pruitt didn't pay aide for apartment hunt](#)

[Politico - Udall: Pruitt broke law by having aide house-hunt for him](#)

[Washington Post - Scott Pruitt admits top aide helped him search for housing but 'on personal time'](#)

[Politico - Pruitt says WOTUS process remains on track to wrap up in 2018](#)

[The Hill - Pruitt: Meeting with Hugh Hewitt before EPA decision led to 'good things'](#)

[Politico - Pruitt defends Superfund listing that followed Hewitt meeting](#)

[New York Times - Scott Pruitt on Capitol Hill: Live Updates](#)

[Washington Post - At Senate hearing, Scott Pruitt's spending and ethics once again take center stage](#)

[Washington Examiner - Scott Pruitt blames EPA staff, policies for lavish security spending](#)

[ABC News - Security a 'silly reason' for first-class flights, Democrat tells Pruitt](#)

[Reuters - EPA chief tells senators criticisms against him unfounded, exaggerated](#)

[The Hill - Dems claim Pruitt's former security chief intervened to hire business associate](#)

[AP - EPA's Pruitt faces senators' question on spending, security](#)

[Reuters - EPA chief tells U.S. lawmakers he has fund to fight off ethics complaints](#)

[The Hill - Pruitt confirms he has a legal defense fund](#)

[Politico - Pruitt confirms he's set up a legal defense fund](#)

[The Hill - Dem senator mocks Pruitt over alleged security threats: 'Nobody even knows who you are'](#)

[Bloomberg - EPA's Pruitt Faces First Senate Grilling Since Ethics Allegations](#)

[CNN - Scott Pruitt unapologetically defends EPA tenure amid blistering criticism](#)

[CNN - Senate panel grilling EPA administrator Scott Pruitt](#)

[Politico - Pruitt disavows EPA tweet aimed at Democrats](#)

[CNN - Pruitt contradicts ex-EPA security chief email over use of sirens in non-emergencies](#)

[AP - The Latest: EPA's Pruitt queried about use of lights, sirens](#)

[The Hill - Pruitt: 'I don't recall' asking security agents to use sirens](#)

[Politico - Pruitt doesn't 'recall' demanding sirens on his vehicle](#)

[The Hill - Pruitt tells Senate on scandals: 'I share your concerns about some of these decisions'](#)

[Politico - Pruitt says he's taken steps to avoid future controversies](#)

[The Hill - Protesters hold up 'fire him' signs behind Pruitt during hearing](#)

[Politico - Murkowski says Pruitt must answer 'legitimate questions' on ethics](#)

[AP - Senators press EPA's Pruitt over lavish spending](#)

[New York Times - Scott Pruitt on Capitol Hill: Round 3 in Progress](#)

[Reuters - EPA chief to face fresh questions about spending in senate hearing](#)

Additional Administrator Pruitt Coverage

[Washington Examiner - EPA's Scott Pruitt given extension to file financial disclosure](#)

[The Hill - Pruitt granted extension to file financial disclosure form](#)

[Washington Examiner - Senate Democrats prod John Barrasso to hold hearing on Pruitt scandals](#)

[The Intercept - Scott Pruitt's Policy Director at EPA Met with Hundreds of Industry Representatives, Emails Show](#)

[Politico - Udall asks GAO to look into political EPA tweet](#)

[Politico - Emails show Pruitt pushing 'red team-blue team' climate debate](#)

[The Hill - Schwarzenegger to Pruitt: Drink contaminated water 'until you tap out or resign'](#)

[Washington Examiner - Scott Pruitt faces a dozen investigations with new probe of email accounts](#)

[The Hill - EPA watchdog announces new probe into Pruitt's emails](#)

[Politico - EPA watchdog launches new probe into Pruitt's email habits](#)

[AP - EPA inspector general investigating Pruitt email accounts](#)

Bill Wehrum on Capitol Hill

[BNA - EPA Air Chief Demurs on Whether Greenhouse Gases Endanger Health](#)

[BNA - Bill on Industrial Emissions Changes Gets EPA Air Chief's Support](#)

Superfund

[BNA - Pruitt Delivers on Promise to Clean Up Toxic Sites](#)

[BNA - EPA Commits to Clean Up Six More Superfund Sites](#)

[AP - Central IN chemical plume added to Superfund priority list](#)

Health and Human Services Study

[Politico - Senator to Pruitt: EPA meddling in health study 'unconscionable'](#)

[Politico - Senate Democrats press Trump administration on chemicals report](#)

[Politico - Pruitt says he was unaware of interference with HHS chemical study](#)

[Washington Post - The White House looks secretive and uncaring about Americans' health \(*Editorial\)](#)

[Politico - Leahy blasts Pruitt over EPA meddling in chemical study](#)

[Politico - EPA move on chemical study may trip up Pruitt](#)

General

[E&E Greenwire - Pruitt quietly advances planned regulatory overhaul](#)

The Hill - Pruitt advisers pan science 'transparency' proposal

The Hill - House lawmakers vote to give modest budget cuts to EPA, Interior

Washington Examiner - EPA, California officials meet on fuel-efficiency rules

Wall Street Journal - Trump Administration Won't Consult California on Vehicle Emissions Rules

BNA - EPA May Invite Hazard, Exposure Data on Dozens of Chemicals

The Hill - Pruitt's EPA disregards the science behind the Clean Air Act (*Op-Ed)

Politico - WRDA faces stumbling block over small community projects

AP - 50 truckloads of soil removed from Montana oil spill site

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Daily Caller

<http://dailycaller.com/2018/05/16/scott-pruitt-capitol-hill/>

Scott Pruitt Survived His Third Capitol Hill Grilling In A Month

By Michael Bastasch, 5/16/18, 2:50 PM

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt survived his third congressional hearing this year, responding to allegations he overspent and violated government ethics rules.

Democrats have asked Pruitt to resign over alleged overspending and ethical violations, and lawmakers wasted no time in grilling the administrator of such scandals. Democrats pull no punches in their indictment of Pruitt.

"Your tenure at the EPA is a betrayal of the American people," New Mexico Sen. Tom Udall, a top Democrat on the Senate Committee on Appropriations, told Pruitt.

Pruitt also admitted one of his close aides, Millan Hupp, helped him identify a new apartment to rent in D.C., though Pruitt said, "It's my understanding that all activity there was on personal time" and he did not pay her to find him housing.

"Then that's a gift. That's a violation of federal law," Udall alleged.

Sen. Patrick Leahy grilled Pruitt on flying first class, which the EPA was approved by agency officials for security reasons. EPA security officials have detailed incidents where people hurled insults and angry words at Pruitt, which Leahy mocked.

"What a silly reason you had to fly first class," Leahy said. "Nobody even knows who you are."

Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen pressed Pruitt for answers about a legal defense fund reportedly set up to defend the administrator from legal attacks. A legal defense fund had indeed been set up and donations to it would be disclosed, Pruitt said.

"It's been set up," Pruitt said, adding his attorney worked with the White House and Government Accountability Office to ensure it follow federal law.

Pruitt, however, did have responses prepared for many of the criticisms levied against him. Looking back, Pruitt said there were some decisions he would not have made, but he also suggested he was being targeted for implementing President Donald Trump's agenda.

"I knew as I began this process over 16 months ago that the issues would be competitive; there are world views that drive decisions we make at the agency," Pruitt told senators during the hearing.

While there are reports some top White House officials want Pruitt removed from office, Trump has consistently supported Pruitt in public statements. "[I] still [have] confidence in the job [Pruitt] is doing," Trump told CNN a few days ago.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/pruitt-says-meeting-victims-families-moved-him-to-push-for-chemical-ban-1231637>

Pruitt says meeting victims' families moved him to push for chemical ban

By Alex Guillen, 5/16/18, 12:13 PM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt today said he will push to finalize a ban on the use of methylene chloride in paint strippers following a recent meeting with the families of several people who have died from exposure to the chemical.

"The meeting I had with those families helped cement the process that we're taking," he told Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) at an appropriations hearing.

Pruitt said EPA would finalize a rule the Obama administration proposed in January 2017 that would ban the chemical's use in paint strippers. Long-term exposure to the chemical can cause liver toxicity, liver and lung cancer and ultimately death.

"This is a matter that we needed to act on, in my view, sooner than what we did," Pruitt said.

The final rule is essentially the same as the ban proposed by the Obama administration in January 2017, Pruitt said, although he said EPA is working to clarify some language regarding the military's use of methylene chloride, also known as DCM.

Washington Examiner

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/scott-pruitt-fishy-trip-to-morocco-a-mischaracterization>

Scott Pruitt: 'Fishy' trip to Morocco a 'mischaracterization'

By Josh Siegel, 5/16/18, 12:36 PM

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt on Wednesday described his controversial trip to Morocco last year as business-related, fighting accusations that the visit was inappropriate and needlessly expensive.

Pruitt told the Senate Appropriations Interior-Environment Subcommittee that he was in the country strictly to work out the environmental side of a free-trade deal between Morocco and the United States.

"I'm so glad you asked these questions about Morocco," Pruitt said in response to questions from Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., who called the trip "fishy."

"It's one of those situations," Pruitt added. "We were on the ground for 36 hours. To characterize the Morocco trip as anything other than EPA business is simply a mischaracterization."

The EPA spent more than \$100,000 on Pruitt's trip to Morocco in December, the Washington Post has reported. The airfare alone cost \$16,217, and the agency spent another \$494 for Pruitt to spend one night at a luxury hotel in Paris.

Comcast lobbyist Richard Smotkin, who has known Pruitt for years, helped plan the trip.

Since the visit, Smotkin won a \$40,000-a-month contract with the Moroccan government to promote the country's cultural and economic interests.

Pruitt on Wednesday said the Moroccan ambassador to the U.S. requested the EPA chief visit the country.

The EPA's inspector general is investigating the Morocco trip as part of a probe into Pruitt's travel and security costs. Critics have questioned the trip and his focus on liquefied natural gas exports, which fall under the Energy Department's purview. Early statements from the EPA's press office about the trip hyped Pruitt's focus on natural gas exports.

Talking Points Memo

<https://talkingpointsmemo.com/livewire/pruitt-incorrectly-says-ex-landlords-husband-wasnt-listed-as-epa-lobbyist>

Pruitt Incorrectly Says Ex-Landlord's Husband Wasn't Listed As EPA Lobbyist

By Matt Shuham, 5/16/18, 12:24 PM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on Wednesday defended the extremely good deal he got on a Washington, D.C. condo lease last year — from one half of a lobbyist power couple — by saying his landlord's husband wasn't subsequently listed as an EPA lobbyist.

Except he was.

"Steve Hart is someone that was not registered as a lobbyist in 2017," Pruitt told Sen. Tom Udall (D-MN) during a budget hearing Wednesday. "He's a longtime associate and friend."

Udall pointed out that Hart was listed as a lobbyist this year, and that the lobbying giant Hart chaired until very recently, Williams & Jensen, said in a statement on the day of Hart's resignation that "Mr. Hart had lobbying contact with the Environmental Protection Agency in the first quarter of 2018."

"Do you think that's acceptable? To have this individual, Mr. Hart, who's a lobbyist, and then you rent a room from him at a pretty good deal?" Udall pressed.

"The filing that you're referring to was for the first quarter of 2018, and it was for the firm, and Mr. Hart was not listed on that disclosure."

Below is a screenshot of the filing in question, with Mr. Hart listed as lobbying the EPA about "[i]ssues relating to support for EPA Chesapeake Bay Programs" on behalf of Smithfield Foods, the meat processing corporation, in the first quarter of this year.

On the same lobbying disclosure, Hart is listed as a Smithfield Foods lobbyist for the Senate and House of Representatives, in addition to the EPA.

And in 2017, Pruitt met with Hart in person, along with a former executive at Smithfield Foods who now sits on the board of the Smithfield Foundation, the company's charitable arm. Hart met with Pruitt and the former Smithfield Food executive, Dennis Treacy, in early 2017 as part of a meeting about the Chesapeake Bay cleanup program, the New York Times and Politico reported.

Both Hart and Smithfield Foods have denied any EPA lobbying relationship, despite the disclosure from Williams & Jensen.

Later on Wednesday, Pruitt admitted in response to Udall's questioning that an aide of his, Millan Hupp, had searched for apartments for Pruitt and his wife "on personal time" without being compensated for the work.

"Then that's a gift," Udall said. "That's in violation of federal law."

CNBC

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/16/epas-scott-pruitt-tripped-up-in-senate-hearing-over-security-request.html>

Embattled EPA chief Scott Pruitt tripped up in Senate testimony over security request

By Tom DiChristopher, 5/16/18, 12:15 PM

Embattled EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said during testimony on Capitol Hill that he does not recall ever asking his security detail to use lights and sirens in government vehicles. However, seconds later, a U.S. senator submitted evidence that the Trump deputy had in fact made the request.

Claims that Pruitt had asked security personnel to flash lights and blare sirens to speed up trips to the airport or dinner surfaced earlier this year in a New York Times report on alleged workplace retaliation at the EPA. The allegations were leveled by the former head of Pruitt's security detail, Eric Weese, who was reportedly moved to another position after refusing to sign off on first-class travel for Pruitt.

Democratic Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico on Wednesday asked Pruitt whether he had personally asked his security detail to use sirens and lights, which is usually reserved for the president.

"I don't recall that happening, Ranking Member Udall," Pruitt said. "There are policies that the agency follows, the agents follow, and to my knowledge they followed it in all instances."

Udall once again claimed Pruitt personally requested sirens and lights on a number of trips. Pruitt responded, "No, I don't recall that."

Udall then submitted an internal EPA email contradicting that claim to the Senate subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies. In the email titled "Lights and Sirens," the former head of Pruitt's security detail, Pasquale Perrotta, told several EPA staffers, "Btw - Administrator encourages the use ..."

The email was attached to a letter sent to EPA Inspector General Arthur Elkins, who is conducting several investigations into Pruitt's conduct. The letter, sent by two senate Democrats on Wednesday, asked Elkins to investigate Perrotta's tenure as head of Pruitt's security detail.

"Mr. Perrotta appears to have been the individual that Administrator Pruitt transmitted most or all of his security demands to, and appears to have obliged the Administrator's demands to spend exorbitantly on unjustified security measures," Senators Thomas Carper and Sheldon Whitehouse wrote.

Perrotta is one of several EPA staffers who recently resigned amid a flurry of allegations of impropriety leveled against Pruitt.

The cost of Pruitt's security is just one of about a dozen issues being probed by Congress, the White House and other government officials. Pruitt's rental of a Washington apartment linked to an energy lobbyist, his frequent first-class travel and several other issues are also under investigation.

Washington Examiner

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/scott-pruitt-epa-press-aide-did-not-try-to-trash-ryan-zinke>

Scott Pruitt: EPA press aide did not try to trash Ryan Zinke

By Josh Siegel, 5/16/18, 12:41 PM

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt on Wednesday denied reports that one of his press aides shopped negative stories about Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

"That was not happening," Pruitt said in testimony before the Senate Appropriations Interior-Environment Subcommittee. "We have investigated that and spoken to Interior [about it]."

A member of Pruitt's press team, Michael Abboud, tried to get the media to report on negative stories about Zinke as a way to deflect attention from investigations of Pruitt's spending and ethics, the Atlantic reported this month.

Pruitt said Wednesday that Abboud denied shopping negative Zinke stories. He added that Pruitt's chief of staff, Ryan Jackson, contacted Interior's chief of staff, Scott Hommel, to reassure him of that.

The Atlantic and other media outlets, including the New York Times, said the reports angered President Trump and perhaps caused him to sour on Pruitt.

Trump has refused to fire Pruitt despite calls from multiple lawmakers to do so, citing his deregulatory actions at the EPA, which resonate with Trump's political base.

AP

<https://apnews.com/3027c5a2911947b3870a83aeb9f4c94a/The-Latest:-Pruitt-denies-aide-shopped-bad-press-about-Zinke>

The Latest: Pruitt denies aide shopped bad press about Zinke

5/16/18, Updated: 12:04 PM

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt (all times local):

11:56 a.m.

EPA chief Scott Pruitt is denying that a member of his press staff sought to plant negative media reports about Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in the hopes of deflecting attention from Pruitt's problems.

Multiple media outlets reported that Pruitt press aide Michael Abboud shopped allegations about Zinke to Washington reporters. Asked about the issue by Democratic Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico, Pruitt replied that it didn't happen.

“We’ve investigated that with the gentleman in question,” Pruitt said.

Udall also asked Pruitt about a tweet issued by EPA’s official account last month mocking Democratic senators for failing to block the confirmation of Andrew Wheeler, a former coal lobbyist now working as EPA’s No. 2 official. The tweet potentially violated federal anti-propaganda rules.

Pruitt says his staff shouldn’t have issued the tweet.

10:40 a.m.

President Donald Trump’s embattled Environmental Protection Agency head is distancing himself from controversies at his agency by blaming subordinates for ethical missteps.

Scott Pruitt is testifying before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, and he’s being pressed by the top Democrat about his unusual security demands.

New Mexico’s Tom Udall is asking Pruitt whether he directed his security detail to use lights and sirens to speed through Washington traffic, even when there wasn’t an emergency.

Pruitt isn’t answering directly. He says there are policies in place and he’s confident his staff has followed them.

The senator has asked again whether Pruitt gave such an order. Pruitt says, “I don’t recall that happening.”

Udall is citing an email written by EPA’s security chief saying Pruitt “encourages the use” of emergency lights.

10:15 a.m.

A top Republican senator worries that the ethical cloud hanging over President Donald Trump’s top environmental official is overshadowing the administration’s pro-business regulatory moves.

Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt is appearing before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, and lawmakers are raising questions about his spending habits, security precautions and large raises to some aides.

Alaska Republican Lisa Murkowski, who heads the subcommittee, is expressing concern about the continued focus on the ethics allegations

And the subcommittee’s top Democrat, New Mexico’s Tom Udall, is accusing Pruitt of failing to inform lawmakers about a \$43,000 soundproof booth for making private phone calls from his office.

Udall tells Pruitt he’s treating his position of public trust “as a golden ticket for extravagant travel and fine dining.”

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387965-pruitt-didnt-pay-aide-for-apartment-hunt>

Pruitt didn’t pay aide for apartment hunt

By Timothy Cama, 5/16/18, 12:13 PM

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) head Scott Pruitt didn't pay a close aide to search for apartments for him, which one senator said is illegal.

Millan Hupp, a top scheduling aide to Pruitt, searched for apartments for him to live in, in an arrangement first reported by the Washington Post last month.

At a Senate Appropriations Committee subpanel hearing Wednesday, Pruitt said that Hupp's apartment-hunting work didn't happen during the hours she was working at the EPA, diffusing a potential issue over outside work during government time.

"All activity that I'm aware of that was engaged in by the individual that you're speaking about occurred in personal time," Pruitt told Sen. Tom Udall (N.M.), the subpanel's top Democrat.

But Pruitt potentially opened up another can of worms by saying that he did not personally pay Hupp for her apartment hunting.

"No, I did not," Pruitt said.

Udall pointed to regulations that prohibit federal employees from doing unpaid, voluntary work for their superiors.

"Then that's a gift," Udall said of Hupp's work. "That's in a violation of federal law."

Hupp worked for Pruitt when he was attorney general of Oklahoma, and Pruitt brought her to Washington, D.C., along with a handful of other aides who now work for him.

Hupp initially attracted attention when the EPA gave her a raise of more than 30 percent. The White House rejected Pruitt's request for the raise, and one to another political aide from his Oklahoma work, so the EPA found a way to go around the White House and institute the raises nonetheless.

Pruitt told lawmakers last month that while he knew about the raises, he didn't know his chief of staff Ryan Jackson would do it without White House approval.

Pruitt told Udall Wednesday that Hupp's raise had nothing to do with her closeness with him.

"The individual that you're referring to is a longtime friend of my wife and myself," he said.

"To link any type of review on a pay increase in just simply not substantiated. It's just not related at all."

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/udall-pruitt-broke-law-by-having-aide-house-hunt-for-him-1231037>

Udall: Pruitt broke law by having aide house-hunt for him

By Anthony Adragna, 5/16/18, 11:26 AM

Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) today accused EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt of violating federal law by having an aide look into possible apartment rentals for him on personal time without being paid.

Pruitt said an aide — “a long-time friend of my wife and myself” — took those actions entirely “on personal time” and added he did not pay the aide for her work. The aide in question is Millan Hupp, an EPA scheduler and advance staffer who has worked for Pruitt since he was Oklahoma attorney general.

“It doesn’t cut it that they’re a friend or that kind of thing,” Udall, ranking member on the Senate Appropriations subcommittee, said. He added that federal law requires that any subordinate — even if they volunteer — be paid fair market value for their work or it’s considered a gift.

“That’s in violation of federal law,” Udall said.

Washington Post

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/05/16/at-senate-hearing-scott-pruitts-spending-and-ethics-once-again-take-center-stage/?utm_term=.8b74130ebf4a

Scott Pruitt admits top aide helped him search for housing but ‘on personal time’

By Brady Dennis and Juliet Eilperin, 5/16/18, 12:56 PM

This post has been updated.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt acknowledged Wednesday that one of his top aides helped him search for housing last year — a potential violation of federal law — but said she had done so “on personal time.”

The admission came during a Senate budget hearing, which including sharp questions from Democrats about the administrator’s ethics and spending decisions. Republicans on the Senate Appropriations Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Subcommittee focused largely on the agency’s policy actions.

Three Democratic senators — Tom Udall (N.M.), Chris Van Hollen (Md.) and Patrick J. Leahy (Vt.) — devoted the bulk of their time to asking Pruitt about actions that have prompted more than a dozen probes by EPA’s Office of Inspector General, the Government Accountability Office and the White House itself.

Leahy belittled Pruitt’s claim that he needed to fly first class because of security concerns. “Nobody even knew who you were ... You have to fly first class? Oh c’mon,” Leahy said. Such decisions had made Pruitt and the EPA “a laughingstock,” he added.

Udall, describing Pruitt’s management of the agency as “disastrous,” again called on Pruitt to resign. The former Oklahoma attorney general, he said, has treated his “position of public trust as a golden ticket for extravagant travel and fine dining.”

At one point, the lawmaker asked Pruitt to provide details on how he had enlisted aide Millan Hupp to help locate local apartment rentals for him last summer. The Washington Post first reported last month that Hupp, who now serves as EPA’s head of scheduling and advance, contacted a District real estate firm and individual homeowners to view properties. Pruitt’s office boosted Hupp’s salary to \$114,590 in March, but reversed the raise after it attracted public scrutiny.

Pruitt, who did not refer to Hupp by name but called her “a longtime friend,” said that when it came to her assistance, “it’s my understanding that all activity there was on personal time.” He added that he did not pay her for this service.

“Then that’s a gift, that’s a violation of federal law,” Udall said, noting that subordinates of federal officials are prohibited from providing free services to their bosses.

Part of Hupp's search took place during office hours, according to two people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid retaliation. Both of them, as well as Capitol Hill resident Laurie Solnik, who showed her apartment to Pruitt at Hupp's request, said the young woman primarily used a personal email account and phone to conduct the search.

According to Don Fox, former acting director and general counsel for the Office of Government Ethics, this activity violates "a general prohibition against misusing government resources" regardless of what time of day Hupp did the work.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (Alaska), the panel's top Republican, noted the numerous allegations surrounding Pruitt at the outset of the hearing.

"I am concerned that many of the important policy efforts that you are engaged in are being overshadowed because of a series of issues related to you and your management of the agency," she said. "Instead of being asked about the work you are doing ... I'm being asked, really constantly asked, to comment on [your] security, housing and travel."

While agreeing with many of Pruitt's policy moves, Murkowski said that when it comes to his ethics, "I do think there are legitimate questions that need to be answered."

Other GOP senators praised Pruitt's policy performance and did not raise any objections over his spending. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss) said she was "most impressed" with his push to ease regulations and clean up a contaminated site in her state.

"You have taken a common-sense approach to the environmental regulatory process," Hyde-Smith said.

For his part, Pruitt took the same approach as he did in a pair of contentious House hearings last month, largely steering clear in his opening statement of addressing the dozen probes he is facing on topics such as the installation of a \$43,000 soundproof phone booth in his office, a cut-rate condo rental from a lobbyist last year and his domestic and international travel expenses.

Under his watch, Pruitt argued, the EPA had made "enormous progress" on President Trump's agenda, "stripping burdensome costs from the economy" without sacrificing environmental protections.

When Murkowski gave him a chance early on to address the various controversies that have consumed the past months, Pruitt came as close as he ever has to publicly acknowledging any personal shortcomings.

"There have been decisions over the past 16 months that, as I look back, I would not make the same decisions again," he said.

But Pruitt downplayed his own roles in several instances of excessive agency spending. Referring to the fact that EPA spent the privacy phone booth that he'd requested, the administrator said, "There were not proper controls in place."

And he repeatedly pivoted to his past positions when pressed about the controversies about his leadership, laying blame for spending decisions at the feet of EPA career and political staffers, and saying public scrutiny about him has been driven by groups who oppose the agency's direction under Trump.

Udall pressed Pruitt on whether he had instructed EPA agents to turn on emergency lights and sirens as they drove him around Washington. Former employees have told The Washington Post and other media that the administrator urged his protective detail to put both on to speed through traffic and that the initial head of his protective detail, Eric Weese, was reassigned after objecting to this practice.

"I don't recall that happening," Pruitt replied, adding that "there are policies in place" governing the use of lights and sirens. "Those policies were followed, to the best of my knowledge, by the agents who serve me."

Udall then cited a Feb. 27, 2017 email released Wednesday by Democratic Sens. Thomas R. Carper (Del.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (R.I.), in which then-EPA special agent Pasquale “Nino” Perrotta informed colleagues that the “Administrator encourages the use” of lights and sirens.

“You personally requested that, on a number of those trips,” Udall said.

“No, I don’t recall that,” Pruitt responded.

Udall has asked the Government Accountability Office to probe whether a recent EPA tweet violated a law that prohibits the use of federal funds for propaganda or publicity. In the tweet, the agency appeared to mock Democrats after the long-awaited confirmation of former coal lobbyist Andrew Wheeler as Pruitt’s top deputy.

“The agency should not have done that,” Pruitt said, though he declined to apologize for the tweet when Udall asked him to do so.

Under questioning from Van Hollen, Pruitt acknowledged that his allies have created a legal-defense fund to help defray legal costs associated with the investigations he now faces. Asked whether the names of donors will be made public, the administrator said “they will be published” in accordance with federal legal requirements.

Cleta Mitchell, a partner at Foley & Lardner specializing in political law, established the fund, according to two individuals briefed on the matter. In an email replying to questions about her role, Mitchell wrote, “Scott has been a friend and client for a long time so I would not be in a position to speak to you about him or any work I have or might or might not do for him.”

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/pruitt-says-wotus-process-remains-on-track-to-wrap-up-in-2018-1231519>

Pruitt says WOTUS process remains on track to wrap up in 2018

By Annie Snider, 5/16/18, 11:42 AM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said his efforts to repeal and replace the Obama administration’s Waters of the U.S. rule remains on track to be completed by the end of the year, despite a White House listing suggesting it had slipped.

Pruitt told a Senate Appropriations panel this morning that he plans to finalize the withdrawal of the Obama-era rule in the third quarter of this year, with a final replacement rule in place “by the end of the year.”

The proposed rewrite rule will be released for public comment “late this month or early next month,” he said, even though the rule has not yet been sent to the White House for interagency review. The proposal is expected to drastically reduce the number of streams and wetlands across the country that are protected under the Clean Water Act — the type of major regulation that often spends weeks undergoing White House review.

The timeline Pruitt described today is the same one he has been discussing for months, although the White House’s Unified Agenda recently changed the expected time frame for the rules, with the rewrite rule not listed there for proposal until August and the final version not scheduled until September of 2019.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387954-pruitt-says-meeting-with-hugh-hewitt-before-superfund-decision-lead>

Pruitt: Meeting with Hugh Hewitt before EPA decision led to 'good things'

By Miranda Green, 5/16/18, 12:02 PM

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) head Scott Pruitt acknowledged Wednesday that his personal meeting with right-leaning radio host Hugh Hewitt last fall helped with the EPA's decision to act on a polluted California site.

But Pruitt also told lawmakers that he didn't understand how the October meeting with Hewitt could be interpreted as nefarious, noting that the California site was already under consideration for placement on his personal priority list of Superfund sites.

"Good things came out of that meeting and that decision," Pruitt said while speaking Wednesday before the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies.

"I'm not entirely sure why there would be criticism around us taking a concerted action to addressing Superfund sites and taking accountability, whoever brings that to our attention," Pruitt added.

Pruitt met with Hewitt and his law firm that represents the Orange County Water District last October, according to internal emails obtained by Politico earlier this month.

Six weeks after the meeting, on Dec. 8, the Orange County North Basin contaminated site was placed on Pruitt's list of Superfund cleanup sites.

Sen. Tom Udall (N.M.), the top Democrat on the Senate panel questioning Pruitt on Wednesday, told the EPA administrator that the connection "looks a little bit fishy."

"The idea has been that there has been scientific analysis and thorough analysis on a list and then special friends get to get on the list that has been created by the agency," he told Pruitt. "It looks a little bit fishy to me."

Hewitt, who also hosts a show on MSNBC, was scolded by the network earlier this month over his Pruitt advocacy. Hewitt's son, James, is also a political aide who works at the EPA press office.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/pruitt-defends-superfund-listing-that-followed-hewitt-meeting-1231636>

Pruitt defends Superfund listing that followed Hewitt meeting

By Anthony Adragna, 5/16/18, 11:48 AM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said the agency was discussing potential action on an Orange County, Calif., Superfund site "well before" conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt arranged a meeting on the issue.

"Good things came out of that meeting and the decision," Pruitt told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee today. "I'm not entirely sure why there would be criticism around us taking concerted action to address Superfund sites and get accountability — whomever brings that to our attention."

POLITICO first reported that EPA added the Orange County North Basin site to Pruitt's list of sites targeted "immediate and intense" action just weeks after the Hewitt-arranged meeting occurred.

But the comments did not placate Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico, the top Democrat on the spending subcommittee.

"The idea is that there's been scientific analysis and through analysis on the list, and then special friends get to get on the list that's been created by the agency," Udall said. "Looks a little bit fishy to me."

New York Times

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/climate/scott-pruitt-epa-hearing.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FEnvironmental%20Protection%20Agency&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection

Scott Pruitt on Capitol Hill: Live Updates

By Lisa Friedman and Coral Davenport, 5/16/18, Updated: 11:49 AM

WASHINGTON — Scott Pruitt, the Environmental Protection Agency administrator, returned to Capitol Hill on Wednesday and was fielding questions from lawmakers about allegations of ethical abuses and excessive spending.

The hearing, before the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on the environment, is Mr. Pruitt's third congressional appearance in a month. It is the first opportunity, though, for senators to ask Mr. Pruitt about his first-class travel, his renting of a \$50-a-night condo from the wife of a lobbyist with business before the agency and other issues that have become the subject of a series of investigations into Mr. Pruitt's stewardship of the agency. His earlier appearances were in the House.

This week, a 12th investigation was announced, this one examining Mr. Pruitt's use of E.P.A. email addresses that he did not disclose, lawmakers said on Tuesday.

Here are the highlights of the hearing so far.

Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, chairwoman of the subcommittee, noted in her opening remarks the heavy interest in Mr. Pruitt's testimony, including the tightly packed hearing room.

"I would suggest that the size of the audience this morning is an indicator of substantial interest in this hearing," she said. She told Mr. Pruitt she was concerned that his work at E.P.A. was being overshadowed by his ethics and spending concerns.

"I'm being asked, really constantly asked, to comment on housing and security and travel," she said. "Instead of seeing articles about efforts to return your agency to its core mission, I'm reading articles about your interactions with the industries that you regulate. Some of this undoubtedly is a result of the 'gotcha' age, but I do think there are legitimate questions that need to be answered."

Sharper words from Democrats

Senator Patrick Leahy, the senior Democrat on the full appropriations committee, drew laughter when he questioned Mr. Pruitt's claim that he was required by his security detail to fly first class because of threats to his life, saying "Nobody even knew who you were."

"You have to fly first class? Oh come on," Mr. Leahy said. He said Mr. Pruitt had become "a laughingstock."

Senator Leahy told Mr. Pruitt he should be protecting the air and water rather than "big polluters" and "industry friends."

Senator Tom Udall of New Mexico said he had asked the investigative arm of Congress, the Government Accountability Office, to investigate whether the E.P.A. acted improperly when it appeared to mock Democrats on Twitter after the Senate voted to confirm the agency's second-in-command, Andrew Wheeler.

The tweet, sent from the agency's official account on April 13, said, "The Senate does its duty: Andrew Wheeler confirmed by Senate as deputy administrator of @EPA. The Democrats couldn't block the confirmation of environmental policy expert and former EPA staffer under both a Republican and a Democrat president."

Senator Udall has asked the accountability office to issue a legal opinion on whether the tweet violated the Antideficiency Act, which prohibits the use of federal funds for publicity or propaganda.

Senator Udall also noted that the G.A.O. had found that the E.P.A. violated federal laws when Mr. Pruitt's office purchased and installed a \$43,000 secure phone booth. "I have a lot of questions for you on this topic," the senator said. "One month later you haven't followed the law by reporting to congress or the president, your boss, how you let this happen and how you plan to fix it."

He called on Mr. Pruitt to resign.

A lifeline is thrown

As Democrats continued to level accusations against Mr. Pruitt, Senator Murkowski asked the administrator, "Do you have anything you would like to add in response?" It was a move we've seen before: citing concern in an opening statement about Mr. Pruitt's spending and ethical issues but then allowing Mr. Pruitt to issue an open-ended defense.

In response Mr. Pruitt denied, as he did before two different House panels last month, that he was to blame.

"I would not make the same decisions again," he said, without detailing which ones. But, he noted, in some cases the E.P.A. was not organized in a way to prevent spending abuses. He specifically cited the secure phone booth, saying, "There were not proper controls early to ensure a legal review."

Mr. Pruitt said he had introduced a new process afterward to ensure that any expenditure over \$5,000 must be approved by the E.P.A. chief of staff and chief financial officer.

Senator Udall asked Mr. Pruitt if he supported the completion of the investigation by a special prosecutor, Robert S. Mueller III, into whether the Trump campaign had colluded with Russians.

Mr. Pruitt, who has labored to remain in President Trump's good graces, initially seemed to suggest that he was unaware of the investigation.

"As a former attorney general — and you and I share that responsibility, we didn't serve at the same time — and you're also a law enforcement official at the E.P.A., do you support special counsel Mueller completing his investigation?" Senator Udall asked.

Mr. Pruitt responded, "I'm sorry, ranking member Udall, investigation into? — "

"A simple yes or no," Senator Udall responded.

"I'm not familiar — I think the process is continuing," Mr. Pruitt replied. He added: "I think as attorney general, it's important for law enforcement, those investigators that serve prosecutors to be able to provide adequate information to them to make informed decisions about how they will proceed as a prosecutor. I did that as attorney general and I would trust that would happen at the federal level as well."

Senator Udall shot back, "As you know, the right answer is yes."

Lights and sirens

Senator Udall asked Mr. Pruitt if he had ever requested the use of lights and sirens on his E.P.A.-issued vehicle when he traveled for personal reasons. Several E.P.A. aides have said that Mr. Pruitt often wanted to use lights and sirens to

expedite trips to airports and dinner, including at least one trip to Le Diplomate, a trendy French restaurant in Washington.

Mr. Pruitt said, "I don't recall that happening."

"There were policies in place that govern the use of lights," Mr. Pruitt said. "Those policies were followed to the best of my knowledge."

Senator Udall then entered into the record an email from Mr. Pruitt's former head of security, Pasquale Perrotta, saying that the administrator had encouraged the use of lights.

A legal defense fund

Senator Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat, asked Mr. Pruitt about a New York Times report that the administrator had set up a legal defense fund to to defray the costs related to the investigations into his conduct.

Mr. Pruitt confirmed that the fund had been established. "I understand that's being set up, yes," he told Senator Van Hollen. "It's been set up."

Senator Van Hollen asked Mr. Pruitt to pledge that all donations to the fund would be made public, and that he would not accept donations from lobbyists or corporations that have business before the E.P.A.

"Absolutely," Mr. Pruitt said.

The condo controversy

Senator Udall questioned Mr. Pruitt about reports that one of Mr. Pruitt's aides had worked without pay to find housing for the administrator.

(E.P.A. aides have said that Millan Hupp, a scheduler for Mr. Pruitt, helped him find the Capitol Hill condominium that he ultimately rented for \$50 a night from the wife of a lobbyist who had business before the agency.)

Mr. Pruitt acknowledged that Ms. Hupp was not paid for her work finding his housing but noted that she was a longtime family friend.

"It doesn't cut it that they're a friend," Senator Udall said. "Did you pay them at the time?"

"All activity that was engaged with was on her personal time," Mr. Pruitt responded.

Senator Udall: "And did you pay for it?"

Mr. Pruitt: "No, I did not."

Senator Udall: "Then it's a gift. It's a violation of federal law."

Federal law prohibits officials from accepting gifts from their subordinates that exceed \$10.

Mr. Pruitt promised to provide copies of all emails and documents from himself and Ms. Hupp related to the housing search.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/05/16/at-senate-hearing-scott-pruitts-spending-and-ethics-once-again-take-center-stage/?utm_term=.30ea7a205ca1

At Senate hearing, Scott Pruitt's spending and ethics once again take center stage

By Brady Dennis and Juliet Eilperin, 5/16/18, 11:36 AM

This post has been updated.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt received a less-than-warm welcome from both Republicans and Democrats as he returned to Capitol Hill on Wednesday for a Senate budget hearing, which was dominated initially by questions about his spending and ethics decisions.

"I am concerned that many of the important policy efforts that you are engaged in are being overshadowed because of a series of issues related to you and your management of the agency," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who chairs the Appropriations Committee. "Instead of being asked about the work you are doing ... I'm being asked, really constantly asked, to comment on [your] security, housing and travel."

While agreeing with many of Pruitt's policy moves, Murkowski said that when it comes to his ethics, "I do think there are legitimate questions that need to be answered."

Democrats were hardly as charitable.

"Every day there seems to be a new scandal and you at dead-center," said Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.), who called Pruitt's management of the agency "disastrous" and his tenure there "a betrayal of the American people."

Udall again called on Pruitt to resign, saying the former Oklahoma attorney general has treated his "position of public trust as a golden ticket for extravagant travel and fine dining."

Udall has asked the Government Accountability Office to probe whether a recent EPA tweet violated a law that prohibits the use of federal funds for propaganda or publicity. In the tweet, the agency appeared to mock Democrats after the long-awaited confirmation of former coal lobbyist Andrew Wheeler as Pruitt's top deputy.

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) also used his opening statement to tear into Pruitt, particularly the claim that he needed to fly first class because of security concerns.

"Nobody even knew who you were ... You have to fly first class? Oh c'mon," Leahy said. Such decisions had made Pruitt and the EPA "a laughingstock," Leahy added.

Leahy was no less critical of the EPA chief's defense of an "indefensible" budget proposal that would slash many programs. The agency's mission, he said, is "to protect human health and the environment, not to protect industry friends ... not to protect polluters."

For his part, Pruitt took the same approach as he did in a pair of contentious House hearings last month, largely steering clear in his opening statement of addressing the dozen probes he is facing on topics such as the installation of a \$43,000 soundproof phone booth in his office, a cut-rate condo rental from a lobbyist last year and his domestic and international travel expenses.

Under his watch, Pruitt argued, the EPA had made "enormous progress" on President Trump's agenda, "stripping burdensome costs from the economy" without sacrificing environmental protections.

When Murkowski gave him a chance early in the hearing to address the various controversies that have consumed the past months, Pruitt came as close as he ever has to publicly acknowledging any personal shortcomings.

"There have been decisions over the past 16 months that, as I look back, I would not make the same decisions again," he said.

But Pruitt downplayed his own roles in several instances of excessive agency spending. Referring to the fact that EPA spent the privacy phone booth that he'd requested, the administrator said, "There were not proper controls in place."

And he repeatedly pivoted to his past positions when pressed about the controversies about his leadership, laying blame for spending decisions at the feet of EPA career and political staffers, and saying public scrutiny about him has been driven by groups who oppose the agency's direction under Trump.

"Some of the criticism," Pruitt said, "is unfounded, and I think, exaggerated."

Udall, the top Democrat on the Appropriations' Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Subcommittee, pressed Pruitt on whether he had instructed EPA agents to turn on emergency lights and sirens as they drove him around Washington. Former employees have told The Washington Post and other media that the administrator urged his protective detail to put both on to speed through traffic and that the initial head of his protective detail, Eric Weese, was reassigned after objecting to this practice.

"I don't recall that happening," Pruitt replied, adding that "there are policies in place" governing the use of lights and sirens. "Those policies were followed, to the best of my knowledge, by the agents who serve me."

Udall then cited a Feb. 27, 2017 email released Wednesday by Democratic Sens. Thomas R. Carper (Del.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (R.I.), in which then-EPA special agent Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta informed colleagues that the "Administrator encourages the use" of lights and sirens.

"You personally requested that, on a number of those trips," Udall said.

"No, I don't recall that," Pruitt responded.

By contrast, several GOP senators praised Pruitt's policy performance and did not raise any objections over his spending. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss) said she was "most impressed" with his push to ease regulations and clean up a contaminated site in her state.

"You have taken a common-sense approach to the environmental regulatory process," Hyde-Smith said.

Washington Examiner

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/scott-pruitt-blames-epa-staff-policies-for-lavish-security-spending>

Scott Pruitt blames EPA staff, policies for lavish security spending

By Josh Siegel, 5/16/18, 11:22 AM

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt said Wednesday he regrets some of his decisions that have led to complaints about his spending and ethical lapses, but stopped short of apologizing for those decisions, and shifted some the blame to EPA policy and career EPA officials.

"There have been decisions that as I look back, I would not make the same decisions again," Pruitt said in testimony before the Senate Appropriations Interior-Environment Subcommittee. "I share your concerns about some of these decisions. I want to rectify those going forward."

But Pruitt said some criticism is “unfounded and exaggerated,” and he continued to blame EPA processes for problems. He also suggested his controversial anti-regulation agenda at the EPA has prompted some of the scrutiny of his actions.

“I knew as I began this process over 16 months ago that the issues would be competitive, there are world views that drive decisions we make at the agency,” Pruitt said. “We are making tough decisions with environmental protection ... and that has brought competition and criticism.”

Pruitt said the agency had inappropriate “controls” and legal reviews that facilitated controversial spending decisions, such as paying \$43,000 for a secure phone booth in his office without notifying Congress, which violated federal law.

He also said “career law enforcement officials” decided to grant him a 24/7 security detail, which no other EPA administrator had before, a story Democrats on the committee rejected.

“All the documents dispute that,” Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., countered.

The EPA has spent more than \$3 million on Pruitt's security, and the Washington Post obtained an email that shows that a Trump administration political appointee decided to get Pruitt 24/7 security as he was assuming office.

Don Benton, who served as the EPA’s senior White House adviser in the first weeks of the new administration, emailed agency security officials requesting the extra security as a precautionary measure against expected threats to Pruitt stemming from early controversial Trump administration policy moves, such as rolling back regulations.

Those explanations did not satisfy Democrats, who called Pruitt a “laughing stock” whose tenure has tarnished the EPA’s reputation.

“Your tenure at the EPA is a betrayal of the American people,” said Udall. “You have used your office to enrich yourself at the expense of the American taxpayer.”

Even Republicans had questions, despite their support for his policies, such as replacing the Obama administration’s Waters of the U.S. rule and Clean Power Plan.

“Unfortunately I am concerned that many of the important policy efforts are overshadowed because of a series of issues related to you and your management of the agency,” said Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska. “Instead of being asked on the work you are doing on WOTUS, the Clean Power Plan, or Superfund sites, I am being constantly asked to comment on security, housing and travel. Some of this undoubtedly is a result of the gotcha age we live in today, but I do think there are legitimate questions that need to be answered.”

There are 12 ongoing federal investigations involving Pruitt’s excess spending, his unusual below-market living arrangement, lobbyists planning trips abroad, and the agency giving big pay raises for his favored staff.

Pruitt conceded Wednesday he has set up a legal fund to pay for his defense.

ABC News

<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/epa-chief-scott-pruitt-face-questions-congress/story?id=55189474>

Security a 'silly reason' for first-class flights, Democrat tells Pruitt

By Stephanie Ebbs and Lucien Bruggeman, 5/16/18, 1:03 PM

Democrats slammed Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt for new developments in persisting questions about his conduct and spending since taking over at the agency, including his costly 24-hour security detail and rental arrangement in a Capitol Hill townhouse connected to lobbyists.

Pruitt was asked about recent reports about his actions at the agency in a hearing before a Senate appropriations subcommittee. He is already under multiple investigations into the cost of his security detail, travel, pay raises for aides, alleged retaliation against whistleblowers, and his time renting a condo in a Capitol Hill townhouse connected to lobbyists.

More than 300 former EPA officials wrote to the EPA's inspector general on Wednesday calling for him to expedite the investigations because they are concerned the scandals have "compromised the agency's mission," according to a copy of the letter released by the Environmental Integrity Project.

EPA's internal watchdog to expand look at Scott Pruitt's conduct, condo rental

The full Senate Appropriations Committee's Ranking Member, Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vermont, called Pruitt's explanation for flying in first class a security precaution a "silly reason."

"Nobody even knows who you are," Leahy added.

More than half of the committee members did not attend the hearing but that did not stop Democrats like the subcommittee's ranking member Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., from lamenting the constant barrage of scandals at the agency and launching strongly-worded attacks on Pruitt's conduct.

"Your tenure at the EPA is a betrayal of the American people," Udall told Pruitt.

Pruitt confirmed Wednesday that a legal defense fund has been set up on his behalf and said that he will follow the proper procedures for the fund, including not accepting money from industries who have business before the EPA.

In response to the criticism of his spending and other decisions at the agency, Pruitt repeated some of the defense he gave in testimony before House committees last month.

Pruitt deflected some of his spending decisions as a result of problems with the process at EPA, adding that he has instituted a new rule requiring additional approval for expenditures more than \$5,000.

"There have been some decisions over the last 16 or so months that, as I look back on those decisions, I wouldn't make the same decisions again," Pruitt said.

Udall asked Pruitt why he hasn't responded to questions about his living arrangement in a condo connected to J. Stephen Hart, the former chairman from Williams & Jensen whose wife co-owned a condo where Pruitt lived during his first year in Washington. It was recently reported that Hart emailed the EPA about nominees for an advisory board even though that was not previously disclosed.

Pruitt said that Hart was not registered as lobbying EPA for his firm at the time and cited the decisions from EPA ethics officials that the condo did not constitute an inappropriate gift because it matched other market rates. Those officials have also said that their statements about the deal only applied to whether it was a gift and not if it was a conflict of interest.

"Mr. Hart was a lobbyist and you rented a room from him and you had issues pending before your agency at the time that Hart's firm was working on. To me, that is just the exact swamp that President Trump was trying to get rid of and all of these questions I have been asking about is this swampy behavior that is going on here," Udall said.

The subcommittee's chair Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, asked Pruitt about several policy issues impacting her state but also said that he needs to address some of the swirling questions around his conduct.

"Instead of being asked about your work on WOTUS or the Clean Air Act I'm being asked, constantly asked, I'm being asked to comment on security or travel," Murkowski said in her opening statement.

Udall also pressed Pruitt about reports that he told his security detail to use lights and sirens to help him get through Washington, DC, traffic.

Pruitt said he "did not recall" any instance like that and that his security detail followed agency procedure for using lights and sirens. Udall submitted an email from the former head of the EPA security detail that seemed to contradict that statement.

"Administrator encourages the use," an email from Pasquale "Nino" Perotta read under the subject line, "Lights and Sirens."

That email was released by Democrats on a different Senate committee with oversight of EPA in a letter to the agency's inspector general asking for an investigation into Perrotta.

EPW Democrats

@EPWDems

2h

After @EPA failed to respond to two requests for info on the role of Pruitt's former security chief, @SenatorCarper and @SenWhitehouse called on @EPAoig to investigate Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta's efforts to direct EPA contracts to his business associate <https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases-democratic?ID=FOA07DB3-BA5E-4E15-B612-BEDD46E8BB83> ...

EPW Democrats

@EPWDems

As @EPAScottPruitt's head of security, Mr. Perrotta intervened to implement Pruitt's security directions – adding up to \$3 million – including first-class flights and even the use of lights and sirens to get to personal events
pic.twitter.com/qZ8uCiNu0X

10:30 AM - May 16, 2018

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Six Democrats on the that committee called for Pruitt to testify, saying that a new letter from the inspector general directly contradicts his previous testimony to two House subcommittees.

In that letter to Environment and Public Works Committee Ranking Member Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., on Monday the EPA's internal watchdog said Pruitt requested a 24/7 security detail before his first day at the agency.

Udall and Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D- Maryland, asked Pruitt to explain that letter. Both Van Hollen and Pruitt read from the document but Pruitt insisted that the decision was made by his security detail and that he did not request it.

"I can only say senator I did not decide, direct that decision to be made," Pruitt said.

Van Hollen said that the document shows that the security team was directed to increase security for Pruitt, not that it determined the upgraded security was necessary.

In a press conference after the hearing Udall said that Democrats will continue to put pressure on Pruitt, even if Pruitt is "being protected" by Republicans.

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito asked about a report in Politico earlier this week that officials from EPA, DOD, and the White House asked HHS to delay a report on the safety of a chemical that is present in drinking water supplies across the country, known as PFAS or PFOS chemicals. The story cited emails from a White House official that would reportedly have said that the chemical is dangerous at much lower levels than currently recommended and referred to is as a "public relations nightmare."

Pruitt said the agency is having a summit on these chemicals and said he supports having the information in the public and taking action to clean up these chemicals.

"I was not aware there had been some holding back the report, I think it's important to have all information out there in the marketplace," Pruitt said.

Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-epa-pruitt/epa-chief-tells-senators-criticisms-against-him-unfounded-exaggerated-idUSKCN1IH1AT>

EPA chief tells senators criticisms against him unfounded, exaggerated

By Valerie Volcovici, 5/16/18, Updated 10:47 AM

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt told senators on Wednesday that some of the controversies surrounding his tenure are "unfounded and exaggerated," as lawmakers bombarded him with questions about his spending and alleged ethical missteps.

Pruitt has been under pressure from mainly Democratic lawmakers in recent weeks over reports about his use of first-class travel, his 24/7 security detail, costly office renovations, and ties to industry - but has retained the support of President Donald Trump and most Republicans for his efforts to roll back Obama-era environmental regulations.

"Some of the criticism is unfounded and exaggerated," Pruitt said in front of the 13-member Senate Appropriations Committee's subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies in a hearing meant to focus on EPA's 2019 budget.

The comment came after Democratic senators lambasted Pruitt's record at EPA. Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont called Pruitt's efforts to roll back environmental regulations at EPA "unconscionable," and quipped that his controversies had made him a "laughing stock."

Ranking member of the committee, New Mexico Democrat Tom Udall, said in his opening statement that Pruitt's tenure at EPA "is a betrayal of the American people."

Most of the committee's six Democratic members have publicly called for Pruitt's resignation.

Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski – chair of the Appropriations subcommittee – said in her opening remarks that she welcomed some of Pruitt's regulatory agenda but said his ethics scandals are detracting from a focus on policy.

"Unfortunately, I am concerned that many of the important policy efforts you are engaged in are being overshadowed because of issues related to you and your management of agency," she said. "There are some legitimate questions that need to be answered," she said.

The controversies have triggered 12 investigations by the EPA's inspector general, congressional committees and the White House. A Government Accountability Office probe recently concluded that the EPA had violated the law by spending \$43,000 on a soundproof phone booth for Pruitt's office without notifying lawmakers first.

Pruitt told the committee that some changes have been implemented since some of the scandals broke, including adding a new requirement that any spending over \$5,000 needs to be signed off by several senior officials.

Pruitt has also said that he has stopped routinely flying first class, something the agency had previously defended as a way to help him avoid threats from the public.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387939-sen-dems-pruitts-former-security-chief-intervened-to-hire-his>
Dems claim Pruitt's former security chief intervened to hire business associate

By Miranda Green, 5/16/18, 11:22 AM

Two Democrats on the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee are requesting that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Inspector General look into the business dealings of administrator Scott Pruitt's former head of security.

Ranking member Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) asked the IG office Tuesday to look into a number of issues related to Pasquale Perrotta's employment and role at the EPA, including his work at an outside security firm he partly owned, his involvement in choosing Edwin Steinmetz — his outside business associate — to conduct security sweeps at the agency, and how he worked with Pruitt to advance his security needs.

The two senators have been active in investigating allegations surrounding Pruitt and have interviewed a number of former and current EPA employees about Pruitt's security requests and other ethics concerns.

Perrotta retired early from the EPA in early May, citing media pressure on his family.

In their letter to the IG office, the senators claim Perrotta had been authorized to operate his security company, Sequoia Security Group, while working at the EPA, but failed to reauthorize his request after five years. Citing emails they obtained between Perrotta and EPA security and facilities management, the Democrats said Perrotta additionally sought to hire Steinmetz to help do a security sweep of Pruitt's office without alerting staff of potential conflicts of interest.

"Contrary to Mr. Perrotta's claims, it is far from clear that it was all 'out in the open.' We believe these communications show Mr. Perrotta was far more involved in the events surrounding the Steinmetz sweep than he claims, that the 'issues' related selecting a vendor were career officials trying to follow proper EPA procedures, and that EPA funds may have been spent in violation of EPA contracting policy," the senators wrote.

Both senators argued that Perrotta's retirement should not affect the investigation.

"In our view his retirement does not vitiate the need for your review because of the potential that other EPA process and procedures that should have imposed oversight on Mr. Perrotta's activities were either not followed or not effective," they wrote.

The senators highlighted that they had both previously sent requests to both Pruitt and the Designated Agency Ethics Official Kevin Minoli to get answers and documents related to their concerns but received no response.

It was reported in December that EPA hired Steinmetz last March on a \$3,000 "communications audit" to sweep Pruitt's office for listening devices. Since then, internal EPA reports have surfaced that show officials labelled the sweep as failing to meet government standards.

AP

<https://apnews.com/28758389bc534dc8a97b1a2aa37bdd61/EPA's-Pruitt-faces-senators'-question-on-spending,-security>

EPA's Pruitt faces senators' question on spending, security

By Ellen Knickmeyer and Michael Biesecker, 5/16/18

WASHINGTON (AP) — Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt faced tough questioning Wednesday from senators about ethics investigations involving his travel spending, security precautions and large raises for young aides.

A leading GOP senator expressed concern that the allegations are overshadowing the Trump administration's pro-business regulatory rollbacks.

"I'm being asked, really constantly asked, to comment on security and on housing and on travel. I'm reading about your interactions with representatives of the industries that you regulate" instead of being asked about EPA policy actions, Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who heads a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, told Pruitt at a hearing normally expected to focus on budget matters.

New Mexico Sen. Tom Udall, the subcommittee's top Democrat, cited the Government Accountability Office's finding in April that Pruitt's purchase of a \$43,000 private office booth for telephone calls broke federal law because the EPA failed to notify Congress in advance of an expenditure over \$5,000.

Udall accused Pruitt of continuing to flout legal requirements to inform lawmakers about that and other big-ticket spending, and "treating your position of public trust as a golden ticket for extravagant travel and fine dining."

Pruitt in April showed his ability to bat away ethics questions from Democrats when he appeared before two House panels. He responded to lawmakers' challenges by shifting blame for questioned spending onto subordinates and pledging broadly to make changes.

There has been no slowdown in damaging headlines for Pruitt since then, including revelations from the EPA's inspector general this week that Pruitt requested and received 24-hour security beginning his first day in office. That challenges Pruitt's account that the round-the-clock security was a result of threats against him after taking office.

Two weeks ago, Pruitt announced the abrupt retirement of the head of his EPA security staff, whom Pruitt had blamed for much of his high security spending,

Despite the mounting investigations, President Donald Trump has said he supports Pruitt. Asked Friday if he still had confidence in the EPA chief, Trump told reporters, "I do."

At one of the House hearings last month, Pruitt spoke broadly of taking responsibility for changes at his agency, and said he had "made changes" in his practice of first- and business-class travel. EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox did not respond to a question Tuesday about whether Pruitt was now flying coach.

On the policy side, Pruitt has demonstrated his commitment to the administration's cause of cutting regulation, especially rules that businesses call burdensome.

Last week, Pruitt announced changes in enforcement of the landmark Clean Air Act that critics said would give industries more say. On Monday, he announced a new "Office of Continuous Improvement" that he said would oversee speedy handling on permit requests, environmental violations and other matters.

A House committee, the EPA's inspector general and the GAO all are investigating various allegations against Pruitt or his administration at EPA. The latest was announced Tuesday, when Democratic lawmakers released a letter from the

inspector general initiating a investigation into Pruitt's use of multiple email accounts, and the agency's compliance with requests for records under the federal Freedom of Information Act.

Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-epa-pruitt/epa-chief-tells-us-lawmakers-he-has-fund-to-fight-off-ethics-complaints-idUSKCN1IH1AT>

EPA chief tells U.S. lawmakers he has fund to fight off ethics complaints

By Valerie Volcovici and Timothy Gardner, 5/16/18, Updated 11:41 AM

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt said on Wednesday that he now has a legal fund in place to help him fight off a growing list of allegations against him related to his spending and reported ethical missteps in office.

"It has been set up," Pruitt told the 13-member Senate Appropriations Committee's subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies about the fund. He was speaking during a hearing meant to focus on the EPA's 2019 budget.

Pruitt has been under pressure from lawmakers in recent weeks over reports about his routine use of first-class travel, his 24/7 security detail, costly office renovations, and ties to industry - criticisms he called overblown on Wednesday.

He is still supported by President Donald Trump and most Republicans lawmakers, who have welcomed his efforts to roll back Obama-era environmental regulations that are seen by industry as overly burdensome.

At Wednesday's hearing, Democratic senators lambasted his record at the agency. Patrick Leahy of Vermont called his regulatory rollbacks and ethical controversies "unconscionable," and Tom Udall of New Mexico said his tenure at the EPA was "a betrayal of the American people."

Most of the committee's six Democratic members have vehemently opposed Pruitt's efforts to roll back climate and pollution regulations introduced under Democratic former President Barack Obama, and have seized on the controversies around Pruitt's conduct to call for his resignation.

The controversies have triggered some 12 investigations by the EPA's inspector general, congressional committees and the White House. A Government Accountability Office probe concluded last month that the EPA had violated the law by spending \$43,000 on a soundproof phone booth for Pruitt's office without first notifying lawmakers.

Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski – chair of the Appropriations subcommittee – said in her opening remarks that she welcomed some of Pruitt's regulatory agenda but the ethics issues were a distraction.

"Unfortunately, I am concerned that many of the important policy efforts you are engaged in are being overshadowed," she said. "There are some legitimate questions that need to be answered," she said.

Pruitt told the panel that he understood the concerns, but added that "some of the criticism is unfounded and exaggerated."

Some changes have been implemented since some of the scandals broke, including adding a new requirement that any spending over \$5,000 needs to be signed off by several senior officials, Pruitt told the panel.

Pruitt has also said that he has stopped routinely flying first class, something the agency had previously defended as a way to help him avoid threats from the public.

Pruitt said his attorney was working with the Government Accountability Office to make sure that his legal defense fund was run properly. All donations to the fund would be published and available to the public, he said, and he committed “absolutely” not to accept any donations from lobbyists or companies that have business before the EPA.

When asked if he would commit to not accepting anonymous donations for the fund, Pruitt said his lawyers handle them and would follow official guidelines.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387943-pruitt-confirms-he-has-a-legal-defense-fund>

Pruitt confirms he has a legal defense fund

By Timothy Cama, 5/16/18, 11:31 AM

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) chief Scott Pruitt said Wednesday that an external legal defense fund has been established to help him with legal costs.

Pruitt confirmed the reporting of The New York Times, in a back-and-forth with Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing.

“It’s been set up,” he said in response to Van Hollen’s questions.

The fund will let friends, allies, lobbyists and others donate to help defray any legal costs Pruitt might incur amid the numerous ethical and spending scandals currently surrounding him, and the dozen or so federal investigations into them.

But lobbyists and corporations with business before the EPA will not be allowed to donate, Pruitt told Van Hollen.

Pruitt indicated that he is not directly involved in the operations of the fund.

“I don’t accept donations. I don’t solicit donations. That’s done by attorneys and others,” he said.

Pruitt said his attorney has been communicating with the Government Accountability Office and the White House’s Office of Government Ethics (OGE) to establish the fund and follow relevant laws.

Pruitt said the fund would follow the OGE’s recommendations that it not accept any anonymous donations, and that all donations will be made public.

Pruitt has been under scrutiny for everything from his first-class travel expenses to large raises given to some of his top aides.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/pruitt-confirms-hes-set-up-a-legal-defense-fund-1230716>

Pruitt confirms he’s set up a legal defense fund

By Anthony Adragna, 5/16/18, 11:02 AM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt confirmed today he’s established a legal defense fund as he faces a dozen federal investigations from government watchdogs and Congress.

"It's been set up," Pruitt said in response to a question from Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.).

Pruitt said donations to the fund would be made public pursuant to disclosure requirements and said he would not solicit donations from lobbyists or corporations with business before the agency. He later noted he would not personally seek contributions himself "since that's done by attorneys and others."

The EPA chief said his attorney "who's done this for a number of years" has worked with Government Accountability Office "to make sure it's done properly." Pruitt said he would follow the advice of White House Office of Legal Counsel with regard to anonymous donations to the fund.

But Van Hollen was not convinced: "I really don't think you're taking this issue of public trust seriously," he said.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387937-dem-senator-mocks-pruitt-over-alleged-security-threats-nobody-even>

Dem senator mocks Pruitt over alleged security threats: 'Nobody even knows who you are'

By Max Greenwood, 5/16/18, 11:09 AM

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) chided Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt on Wednesday for racking up more than \$100,000 in expenses on first-class flights, telling him that "nobody even knows who you are."

"What a silly reason you had to fly first class, because of a danger to you, unless you flew first class," Leahy told Pruitt at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing for the EPA. "Nobody even knows who you are."

"Oh, somebody might criticize you? You got security people that we've never seen before. But you have to fly first-class?" Leahy continued. "Oh, come one."

Pruitt has come under fire for a number of questionable expenses and arrangements in recent months. Politico reported in March that the EPA administrator had spent more than \$105,000 on first-class flights, in addition to \$58,000 spent to charter private and military planes.

The EPA has said that the first-class flights were necessary, because of security threats against Pruitt.

In a memo obtained by The Washington Post last week, the head of Pruitt's security detail requested business or first-class seating for the administrator, because of passengers "lashing out" at Pruitt when he was seated in coach.

"We believe that the continued use of coach seats for the Administrator would endanger his life and therefore respectfully ask that he be placed in either business or first class accommodations," the memo, dated May 1, 2017, reads.

Bloomberg

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-16/epa-chief-pruitt-faces-senate-grilling-as-controversies-swirl>

EPA's Pruitt Faces First Senate Grilling Since Ethics Allegations

By Jennifer A Dlouhy, 5/16/18, 10:21 AM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt faced intense criticism Wednesday in his first Senate testimony since a crush of ethical allegations that have put his job in jeopardy.

"Your leadership at the EPA is disastrous," Senator Tom Udall, a Democrat from New Mexico, told Pruitt at the start of the Senate appropriations subcommittee hearing Wednesday. Udall said he was as concerned by Pruitt's work to undo environmental regulations as he was the ethical allegations.

"I just can't separate your scandals from these shameless efforts to dismantle EPA," Udall said. "Both your scandals and your policy decisions abuse your position of public trust and make a mockery of your responsibilities as head of EPA. You show the same disregard for our ethical standards and fiscal controls as you show for the air we breathe and the water we drink."

Senator Lisa Murkowski, a Republican from Alaska who heads the appropriations subcommittee grilling Pruitt, cast the controversies as a distraction overshadowing Pruitt's policy work. Instead of being queried about the EPA's efforts to rewrite a water pollution rule and other regulations, Murkowski said she's "constantly being asked" to comment on Pruitt's security protection, housing and travel.

"Some of this undoubtedly is a result of the gotcha age that we live in today that dominates the politics of today," Murkowski said. "But I do think there are legitimate questions that need to be answered."

Although the session was formally designed to focus on the budget of the Environmental Protection Agency, it was dominated by the controversies surrounding Pruitt. Senators signaled they were eager to press the administrator about his frequent taxpayer-funded travel, questionable spending decisions at the EPA, raises for top aides over White House objections and allegations some employees were sidelined after challenging his decisions.

Pruitt was in front of a decidedly unfriendly audience. Six of the seven Democrats on the panel have already signed onto a resolution calling on him to resign. Activists held signs saying "Fire Him" as Pruitt began testifying.

Senator Patrick Leahy, a Democrat from Vermont, mocked Pruitt's reliance on first-class travel. Although Pruitt now flies coach, he booked first-class seats in commercial aircraft during most trips last year, with the EPA justifying the practice on security grounds.

"What a silly reason you had to fly first class," Leahy said. "Somebody might criticize you. You've got security people that we've never seen before. But you have to fly first class? Oh, come on."

Leahy said the cascade of scandals "are an embarrassment to the agency, they are an embarrassment to Republicans and Democrats alike."

Recently released documents have shed more light on Pruitt's oversight of the agency, revealing frequent consultation with industries regulated by the EPA. They also underscored the role influential donors and lobbyists played in planning some of his travel. Sheldon Adelson, chairman of casino operator Las Vegas Sands, helped arrange parts of Pruitt's itinerary for a subsequently canceled trip to Israel originally slated for February. And Leonard Leo, executive vice president of the conservative Federalist Society, initially paid for Pruitt's meal at a restaurant in Rome last June, as first reported by The Washington Post.

Pruitt could face scrutiny about his around-the-clock protection, as newly released documents show that stepped-up security began on his first day at the agency.

Critics also have pounced on Pruitt's decision to rent a bedroom on Capitol Hill from a lobbyist whose husband had clients with matters pending before the agency. Under the lease's unusually favorable terms, Pruitt was allowed to pay \$50 per day to rent the space -- but just on the nights he stayed there -- and he could leave "limited" belongings behind even when he was traveling.

Pruitt defended himself against some of the same allegations in back-to-back House hearings last month, casting the controversies as “a distraction” promoted by critics who “want to attack and derail the president’s agenda.” After telling lawmakers that EPA career staff oversaw the acquisition of a \$43,000 soundproof phone booth, Pruitt on Friday issued a memo putting three political appointees in charge of Okaying any expenditures over \$5,000 on his behalf.

Four Republicans and at least 170 Democrats in the House and Senate have sought Pruitt’s ouster. Some White House officials last month cautioned Republican lawmakers and other conservative allies to temper their defense of Pruitt, in a sign administration support for the EPA chief had waned.

CNN

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/16/politics/scott-pruitt-hearing-senate/index.html>

Scott Pruitt unapologetically defends EPA tenure amid blistering criticism

By Gregory Wallace and Veronica Stracqualursi, 5/16/18, 12:46 PM

Washington (CNN) -- Scott Pruitt, the embattled administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vehemently defended himself while facing tough questions about his spending and alleged ethical transgressions at a Capitol Hill hearing Wednesday.

In his opening remarks, Pruitt said there were some decisions during his tenure he would not have made again with the benefit of hindsight, but he also denied some of the allegations against him and said some were exaggeration.

"So I share your concerns about some of these decisions. I want to rectify those going forward," Pruitt said. "I also want to highlight for you that some of the criticism is unfounded and I think is exaggerated and I think it feeds this division that we've seen around very important issues affecting the environment."

While the hearing was billed to be about the agency's budget, lawmakers were primarily focused on the fact that Pruitt's decisions at the head of EPA are the subject of a dozen investigations, reviews and audits from a variety of oversight bodies, including the inspector general, Government Accountability Office and Congress.

Pruitt contradicts EPA security chief email

Among the new development's at Wednesday's hearing is Pruitt contradicting an internal email from his security chief that showed he encouraged the use of lights and sirens for non-emergency situations while traveling in a motorcade. The subcommittee's top Democrat, Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico, raised the issue of a former special agent who worked on Pruitt's protection team who claimed he was demoted when he refused to drive with lights and sirens blaring through the streets of Washington.

Pruitt replied that the "policies were followed to the best of my knowledge by each of the agents that serve me."

When Udall pressed him again, Pruitt said he does not recall and that policies were followed by his agents "in all instances."

The Democrat senator followed up for a third time: "You personally requested that on a number of trips?" he asked Pruitt.

"No, I don't recall that happening," Pruitt said.

Udall then pointed to an internal email from Pruitt's former security chief that contradicts Pruitt's testimony.

In a February 2017 email released Wednesday by Democratic Sens. Tom Carper and Sheldon Whitehouse, EPA security chief Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta told others at the agency that Pruitt "encourages the use" of lights and sirens. Perrotta has since resigned.

When grilled about specific incidents -- including an official agency tweet in April mocking Democrats voting against the confirmation of an EPA official -- Pruitt repeatedly refused to apologize.

"The agency should not have done that," he said repeatedly, when asked if he should apologize by Udall.

At the beginning of the hearing, Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who chairs the Senate subcommittee, told Pruitt she was concerned that "many of the important policy efforts that you are engaged in are being overshadowed because of a series of issues related to you and your management of the agency."

"Instead of being asked about the work that you're doing ... I'm being asked, really constantly asked, to comment on security, on housing and on travel," she said.

Udall issued some of the harshest criticism of Pruitt, calling his leadership at the EPA "a betrayal of the American people."

"You have used your office to enrich yourself at the expense of the American taxpayer and public health and such abuses have led to several investigations," Udall said.

Pruitt's previous testimony and what's happened since

In his last congressional testimony about three weeks ago, Pruitt was pressed about his unprecedented security detail, travel practices and massive raises given to aides.

At those hearings, Pruitt told lawmakers the \$43,000 soundproof booth installed in his office is not rated for classified materials, the explanation he had previously used to defend the purchase. Pruitt also said he had given his chief of staff the authority used to grant two close aides massive raises, contradicting his claim in interviews to have no prior knowledge of the pay boosts. A whistleblower said Pruitt lied about not retaliating against aides who questioned his decisions. And the inspector general said Pruitt misrepresented to Congress a memo he provided them about security concerns.

President Donald Trump expressed his confidence in Pruitt as recently as last week at a meeting with automakers, where Pruitt sat one seat away from Trump.

Since Pruitt's April testimony, more revelations have come out about Pruitt:

The EPA Inspector General undercut Pruitt's rationale for his around-the-clock security detail. At Pruitt's request, the enhanced protection began on his first day in office, the inspector general said, while Pruitt and his aides have pointed to a memo dated six months into his tenure as justifying justification the detail. The protection team is several times larger than the one used by his predecessors and cost taxpayers at least \$2 million last year for salaries alone, CNN has calculated.

The inspector general told Congress this week it plans to open a new probe that will "review whether Administrator Scott Pruitt is complying with the Federal Records Act and the EPA's Records Management Policy when using multiple email accounts." Records show four accounts were created for Pruitt. His spokesman has said one is used for administrative tasks, such as scheduling, and another was used only briefly.

Three key Pruitt aides have left the agency, including his top spokeswoman, the head of his security detail and the controversial ex-banker Pruitt tapped to lead environmental cleanup projects.

Among Pruitt's guests at a dinner in Italy last year was Cardinal George Pell, the Vatican official who has been charged with sexual abuse. At the time of the dinner, Pell had not been charged but was under investigation. Pell has pleaded "not guilty" for those charges.

Internal emails show how EPA officials shielded Pruitt from facing questions from the public and reporters. "My sincere apologies for causing any difficulty but we cannot do open q&a from the crowd," Pruitt's scheduler emailed the host of one event Pruitt would attend.

Industry lobbyists helped plan two overseas trips for Pruitt, including a visit to Morocco and another to Australia that was canceled due to hurricanes. "Rick and I will attend and will be present but will not be listed as members of the delegation," wrote one of the lobbyists.

CNN uncovered an "executive protection" playbook posted by the security company owned by Pruitt's now-departed security chief. Among the tips from the 2015 post: "Make protection feel like a perk" and "eliminate many of the usual annoyances of travel."

Hugh Hewitt, a conservative radio host, personally arranged a meeting between Pruitt and California water officials. Within a few months, Pruitt announced a groundwater cleanup project in the area would be a priority for the Superfund cleanup program.

Two of Pruitt's toughest critics -- Sens. Tom Carper of Delaware and Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, both Democrats -- do not sit on the subcommittee that will question Pruitt this week, but have requested the Republican chairman overseeing their committee bring in Pruitt.

Also not on the subcommittee is Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley, who on Tuesday cited a biofuel decision when announcing he is considering calling for Pruitt's resignation.

CNN

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/16/politics/scott-pruitt-hearing-senate/index.html>

Senate panel grilling EPA administrator Scott Pruitt

By Gregory Wallace and Veronica Stracqualursi, 5/16/18, 10:47 AM

Scott Pruitt, the embattled administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, is facing tough questions about his spending and alleged ethical transgressions at a Capitol Hill hearing Wednesday on the agency's budget.

At the beginning of the hearing, Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who chairs the Senate subcommittee, told Pruitt she was concerned that "many of the important policy efforts that you are engaged in are being overshadowed because of a series of issues related to you and your management of the agency."

"Instead of being asked about the work that you're doing ... I'm being asked, really constantly asked, to comment on security, on housing and on travel," she said.

Utah Democrat Tom Udall, the top Democratic senator on the panel, issued a harsh take down of Pruitt, calling his leadership at the EPA "a betrayal of the American people."

"You have used your office to enrich yourself at the expense of the American taxpayer and public health and such abuses have led to several investigations," Udall said.

In his opening remarks, Pruitt said there were some decisions during his tenure he would not have made again with the benefit of hindsight, but he also denied some of the allegations against him and said some were exaggeration.

"So I share your concerns about some of these decisions. I want to rectify those going forward," Pruitt said. "I also want to highlight for you that some of the criticism is unfounded and I think is exaggerated and I think it feeds this division that we've seen around very important issues affecting the environment."

In his last congressional testimony about three weeks ago, Pruitt was pressed about his unprecedented security detail, travel practices and massive raises given to aides.

At those hearings, Pruitt told lawmakers the \$43,000 soundproof booth installed in his office is not rated for classified materials, the explanation he had previously used to defend the purchase. Pruitt also said he had given his chief of staff the authority used to grant two close aides massive raises, contradicting his claim in interviews to have no prior knowledge of the pay boosts. A whistleblower said Pruitt lied about not retaliating against aides who questioned his decisions. And the inspector general said Pruitt misrepresented to Congress a memo he provided them about security concerns.

Pruitt's decisions at the head of EPA are the subject of a dozen investigations, reviews and audits from a variety of oversight bodies, including the inspector general, Government Accountability Office and Congress.

President Donald Trump expressed his confidence in Pruitt as recently as last week at a meeting with automakers, where Pruitt sat one seat away from Trump.

Since Pruitt's April testimony, more revelations have come out about Pruitt:

- The EPA Inspector General undercut Pruitt's rationale for his around-the-clock security detail. At Pruitt's request, the enhanced protection begin on his first day in office, the inspector general said, while Pruitt and his aides have pointed to a memo dated six months into his tenure as justifying justification the detail. The protection team is several times larger than the one used by his predecessors and cost taxpayers at least \$2 million last year for salaries alone, CNN has calculated.
- The inspector general told Congress this week it plans to open a new probe that will "review whether Administrator Scott Pruitt is complying with the Federal Records Act and the EPA's Records Management Policy when using multiple email accounts." Records show four accounts were created for Pruitt. His spokesman has said one is used for administrative tasks, such as scheduling, and another was used only briefly.
- Three key Pruitt aides have left the agency, including his top spokeswoman, the head of his security detail and the controversial ex-banker Pruitt tapped to lead environmental cleanup projects.
- Among Pruitt's guests at a dinner in Italy last year was Cardinal George Pell, the Vatican official who has been charged with sexual abuse. At the time of the dinner, Pell had not been charged but was under investigation. Pell has pleaded "not guilty" for those charges.
- Internal emails show how EPA officials shielded Pruitt from facing questions from the public and reporters. "My sincere apologies for causing any difficulty but we cannot do open q&a from the crowd," Pruitt's scheduler emailed the host of one event Pruitt would attend.
- Industry lobbyists helped plan two overseas trips for Pruitt, including a visit to Morocco and another to Australia that was canceled due to hurricanes. "Rick and I will attend and will be present but will not be listed as members of the delegation," wrote one of the lobbyists.
- CNN uncovered an "executive protection" playbook posted by the security company owned by Pruitt's now-departed security chief. Among the tips from the 2015 post: "Make protection feel like a perk" and "eliminate many of the usual annoyances of travel."
- Hugh Hewitt, a conservative radio host, personally arranged a meeting between Pruitt and California water officials. Within a few months, Pruitt announced a groundwater cleanup project in the area would be a priority for the Superfund cleanup program.

Two of Pruitt's toughest critics -- Sens. Tom Carper of Delaware and Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, both Democrats -- do not sit on the subcommittee that will question Pruitt this week, but have requested the Republican chairman overseeing their committee bring in Pruitt.

Also not on the subcommittee is Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley, who on Tuesday cited a biofuel decision when announcing he is considering calling for Pruitt's resignation.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/pruitt-disavows-epa-tweet-aimed-at-democrats-1230598>

Pruitt disavows EPA tweet aimed at Democrats

By Alex Guillen, 5/16/18, 10:40 AM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said his agency was wrong to issue a tweet last month that criticized Democrats who voted against the confirmation of an EPA official.

"I was unaware of the tweet and that shouldn't have occurred," Pruitt said at a Senate appropriations hearing. Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) argued that the tweet "mocked" Democrats, allegedly in violation of laws about social media use by federal agencies.

The April tweet read: "The Senate does its duty: Andrew Wheeler confirmed by Senate as deputy administrator of @EPA. The Democrats couldn't block the confirmation of environmental policy expert and former EPA staffer under both a Republican and a Democrat president."

Pruitt declined several times to personally apologize for the tweet, saying multiple times that "The agency should not have done that."

Udall has asked the Government Accountability Office to review the matter.

CNN

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/16/politics/scott-pruitt-hearing-tom-udall-sirens/index.html>

Pruitt contradicts ex-EPA security chief email over use of sirens in non-emergencies

By Veronica Stracqualursi, 5/16/18, 12:44 PM

Washington (CNN) -- Scott Pruitt on Wednesday contradicted an internal email from his former security chief that said the embattled Environmental Protection Agency administrator encouraged the use of lights and sirens for non-emergency situations while traveling in a motorcade.

During a Capitol Hill hearing on the agency's budget, Sen. Tom Udall, D-New Mexico, raised the issue of a former special agent who worked on Pruitt's protection team who claimed he was demoted when he refused to drive with lights and sirens blaring through the streets of Washington.

"Let's get the record straight: Did your security detail use sirens while you were in the car for non-emergencies, yes or no?" Udall asked Pruitt, who is at the center of a dozen investigations, reviews and audits.

Pruitt replied that the "policies were followed to the best of my knowledge by each of the agents that serve me."

When Udall pressed him again, Pruitt said he did not recall and that policies were followed by his agents "in all instances."

The Democrat senator followed up for a third time: "You personally requested that on a number of trips?" he asked Pruitt.

"No, I don't recall that happening," Pruitt said.

Udall then pointed to an internal email from Pruitt's former security chief that contradicts Pruitt's testimony.

In a February 2017 email released Wednesday by Democratic Sens. Tom Carper and Sheldon Whitehouse, EPA security chief Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta told others at the agency that Pruitt "encourages the use" of lights and sirens. Perrotta has since resigned.

A letter from the agency's inspector general also contradicted Pruitt and the EPA's claim that the need for a 24/7 security detail was a response to an assessment of death threats against him.

AP

<https://apnews.com/3027c5a2911947b3870a83aeb9f4c94a/The-Latest:-EPA's-Pruitt-queried-about-use-of-lights,-sirens>

The Latest: EPA's Pruitt queried about use of lights, sirens

5/16/18

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt (all times local):

10:40 a.m.

President Donald Trump's embattled Environmental Protection Agency head is distancing himself from controversies at his agency by blaming subordinates for ethical missteps.

Scott Pruitt is testifying before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, and he's being pressed by the top Democrat about his unusual security demands.

New Mexico's Tom Udall is asking Pruitt whether he directed his security detail to use lights and sirens to speed through Washington traffic, even when there wasn't an emergency.

Pruitt isn't answering directly. He says there are policies in place and he's confident his staff has followed them.

The senator has asked again whether Pruitt gave such an order. Pruitt says, "I don't recall that happening."

Udall is citing an email written by EPA's security chief saying Pruitt "encourages the use" of emergency lights.

10:15 a.m.

A top Republican senator worries that the ethical cloud hanging over President Donald Trump's top environmental official is overshadowing the administration's pro-business regulatory moves.

Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt is appearing before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, and lawmakers are raising questions about his spending habits, security precautions and large raises to some aides.

Alaska Republican Lisa Murkowski, who heads the subcommittee, is expressing concern about the continued focus on the ethics allegations

And the subcommittee's top Democrat, New Mexico's Tom Udall, is accusing Pruitt of failing to inform lawmakers about a \$43,000 soundproof booth for making private phone calls from his office.

Udall tells Pruitt he's treating his position of public trust "as a golden ticket for extravagant travel and fine dining."

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387936-pruitt-i-dont-recall-asking-security-agents-to-use-sirens>

Pruitt: 'I don't recall' asking security agents to use sirens

By Timothy Cama, 5/16/18, 11:00 AM

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) head Scott Pruitt told senators Wednesday that he doesn't "recall" asking his security detail to use lights and sirens when driving him through Washington, D.C.

The New York Times reported last month that Pruitt had asked his security agents and driver to use lights and sirens in non-emergency situations to get to certain appointments faster, including dinner at a French restaurant, and that an agent was removed from the security detail for pushing back.

Sen. Tom Udall (N.M.), the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee panel that oversees the EPA's budget, asked Pruitt repeatedly if that report was true.

"I don't recall that happening, Sen. Udall," Pruitt said. "There are policies that the agency follows, the agents follow. And to my knowledge, they followed it in all instances."

Asked again, specifically, if he had requested the use of lights and sirens, Pruitt again denied knowledge.

"No, I don't recall that," he said.

The denials came despite claims earlier Wednesday by Sens. Tom Carper (D-Del.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.).

In a letter to EPA's Inspector General Arthur Elkins, the Democrats say they obtained an email from Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta, at the time the head of Pruitt's security detail, saying that Pruitt "encourages the use" of lights and sirens when his detail drives him.

Carper and Whitehouse asked for an investigation into Perrotta's role in Pruitt's security decisions, including the potential use of sirens.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/pruitt-doesnt-recall-demanding-sirens-on-his-vehicle-1230662>

Pruitt doesn't 'recall' demanding sirens on his vehicle

By Anthony Adragna, 5/16/18, 10:44 AM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said today he didn't remember demanding his security detail turn on their lights and sirens to beat Washington traffic and get to a restaurant.

"I don't recall that happening," he said in response to Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.), top Democrat on a Senate Appropriations subcommittee.

But Udall shot back by referencing an email from Pruitt's former security chief, Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta, that said "Administrator Pruitt encourages the use" of those lights and sirens. Udall's office has not released that email. That comes as POLITICO reported that Perrotta goaded and encouraged such behavior on security matters.

CBS News reported in April that an agent on Pruitt's security detail was reassigned after questioning his demands to use the lights and sirens on his vehicle.

In a separate move today, two top Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Democrats — Tom Carper (Del.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (R.I.) — called on EPA's inspector general investigate whether Perrotta steered agency business to his private firm.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387934-pruitt-tells-senate-on-scandals-i-share-your-concerns-about-some-of>

Pruitt tells Senate on scandals: 'I share your concerns about some of these decisions'

By Timothy Cama, 5/16/18, 10:47 AM

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) head Scott Pruitt took a conciliatory process early on in a Wednesday Senate hearing in response to questions about his ethical and spending scandals.

Given time by Senate Appropriations Committee subpanel Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) to respond to criticisms, Pruitt conceded that some of the issues involved were not handled properly.

"Some of the areas of criticism are frankly areas where processes at the agency were not properly instituted to prevent certain abuses from happen," Pruitt said.

"There have been decisions over the last or so 16 months that, as I look back on those decisions, I would not make the same decisions again," he continued.

He referred specifically to criticisms about a \$43,000 soundproof phone booth EPA built in his office, saying, "that was a process where there were not proper controls early to ensure a legal review of the obligation of the agency to inform Congress" and the Government Accountability Office (GAO), he said.

The GAO determined last month that Pruitt violated a law that required the EPA to notify Congress before spending \$5,000 to furnish Pruitt's office.

"As the leader of the agency, it is my responsibility" to crack down, Pruitt said.

At a pair of House hearings last month, Pruitt specifically blamed career employees at the EPA for the phone booth, saying he only wanted a secure phone line, but it ballooned into the booth.

But some of the criticisms are not valid, he said.

"Some of the criticism is unfounded and exaggerated," Pruitt told senators, saying they came about due to criticisms that were policy-based.

Sen. Tom Udall (N.M.), the top Democrat on the panel, used his opening remarks to castigate Pruitt on policy, ethics and spending grounds.

"Every day there seems to be a new scandal, and you at dead center," Udall said.

"Your tenure at the EPA is a betrayal of the American people. You have used your office to enrich yourself at the expense of the American taxpayer and public health, and such abuses have led to several investigations."

Sen. Pat Leahy (Vt.), the top Democrat on the full Appropriations Committee, specifically questioned Pruitt's need for a 24/7 security detail and to fly first-class on the taxpayer's dime.

Leahy pointed out that Pruitt and the EPA said he flew first class because of people yelling at him.

"What a silly reason to fly first class," Leahy said. "Nobody even knows who you are."

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/pruitt-says-hes-taken-steps-to-avoid-future-controversies-1230532>

Pruitt says he's taken steps to avoid future controversies

By Anthony Adragna, 5/16/18, 10:34 AM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt blamed "processes" at the agency not being followed for some of his ongoing spending and ethical issues, but told Senate Appropriators he had taken steps to avoid similar issues going forward.

"There have been decisions over the last 16 or so months, that as I look back, I would not make those same decisions again," Pruitt said in response to the panel's Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska).

"I share your concerns about some of these decisions. I want to rectify those going forward," Pruitt continued. "I also want to highlight for you that some of the criticism is unfounded and I think exaggerated. And I think it feeds this division that we've seen around very important issues affecting the environment."

Pruitt highlighted the decision to install a \$43,000 phone booth in his office as one he'd taken steps to avoid going forward, pointing to a memo that gave three top staffers authority today to approve spending above \$5,000 on his behalf.

He did not mention the swirl of controversies around them until asked by Murkowski, instead focusing his opening remarks on efforts to address the Superfund cleanup backlog, rolling back Obama-era regulations and making agency operations more efficient.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387930-protesters-hold-up-fire-him-signs-behind-pruitt-during>

Protesters hold up 'fire him' signs behind Pruitt during hearing

By John Bowden, 5/16/18, 10:28 AM

Protesters attending a Senate hearing Wednesday on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2019 budget request held signs behind embattled EPA chief Scott Pruitt urging President Trump to "fire him" over recent scandals.

Three protesters could be seen on C-SPAN camera holding the signs early Wednesday morning behind Pruitt, coming in to view when he answered questions from senators about his spending at the top environmental watchdog agency.

At some point, the protesters holding the signs appeared to walk out or removed the signs, as they could no longer be seen behind Pruitt minutes later into his testimony.

Pruitt has weathered a deluge of negative press coverage in recent weeks, including reports that he directed aides to come up with "official" reasons to travel to preferred travel destinations when he joined EPA and rented a condo from the wife of a top energy lobbyist.

Democrats have called on Trump to fire Pruitt over the scandals, which they have challenged run counter to Trump's campaign promise to "drain the swamp" of government corruption in Washington.

During Wednesday's hearing, Pruitt was lectured by Democrats, including Sen. Patrick Leahy (Vt.), about his spending habits at the EPA as lawmakers discussed the agency's 2019 budget request.

"Forget about your own ego and your first class travel and your special phone booths and all these things that just make you a laughing stock, and your agency a laughing stock," Leahy told Pruitt.

Politico

<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/05/16/scott-pruitt-epa-appropriations-committee-hearing-591851>

Murkowski says Pruitt must answer 'legitimate questions' on ethics

By Annie Snider, 5/16/18, 10:10 AM

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who chairs the Senate panel overseeing EPA's budget, said there are "legitimate questions that need to be answered" about the ethics scandals plaguing Administrator Scott Pruitt.

"Unfortunately, I am concerned that many of the important policy efforts that you are engaged in are being overshadowed because of a series of issues related to you and your management of the agency," Murkowski said at the opening of a Senate Appropriations Interior-EPA subcommittee hearing.

Murkowski lauded Pruitt's work to repeal the Waters of the U.S. rule and Clean Power plan, but said instead she is being asked, "really constantly" about Pruitt's sweetheart condo rental deal from a lobbyist, 24/7 security and frequent first class travel.

Pruitt is facing a dozen investigations from federal watchdogs over those and other controversies.

Sen. Tom Udall, the panel's ranking member, excoriated Pruitt.

"It needs to be said that your tenure at the EPA is a betrayal of the American people," he said, criticizing not just the ethics scandals, but also his regulatory rollbacks.

"This isn't cooperative federalism, it's flat-out abandonment," he said.

AP

<https://apnews.com/28758389bc534dc8a97b1a2aa37bdd61/Senators-press-EPA's-Pruitt-over-lavish-spending>

Senators press EPA's Pruitt over lavish spending

By Ellen Knickmeyer, 5/16/18

WASHINGTON (AP) — Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt goes before a Senate panel Wednesday as he faces a growing number of federal ethics investigations over his lavish spending on travel and security.

The occasion, an appearance before the Senate appropriations environmental subcommittee, would normally be a routine budget hearing for an agency head. But senators on the panel planned to press Pruitt on issues including his lavish spending for first-class travel and security.

Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, the subcommittee chairwoman, has told reporters that she was concerned about the allegations surrounding Pruitt, but that it was up to the Trump administration to decide his future.

Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico, the lead Democrat on the subcommittee, in prepared remarks released ahead of the hearing cited the Government Accountability Office's finding in April that Pruitt's purchase of a \$43,000 private office booth for telephone calls broke federal law because the EPA failed to notify Congress in advance of an expenditure over \$5,000.

Udall accused Pruitt of continuing to flout legal requirements to inform lawmakers about that and other big-ticket spending, and "treating your position of public trust as a golden ticket for extravagant travel and fine dining."

Pruitt in April showed his ability to bat away ethics questions from Democrats when he appeared before two House panels. He responded to lawmakers' challenges by shifting blame for questioned spending onto subordinates and pledging broadly to make changes.

There has been no slow-down in damaging headlines for Pruitt since then, including revelations from the EPA's inspector general this week that Pruitt requested and received 24-hour security beginning his first day in office. That challenges Pruitt's account that the round-the-clock security was a result of threats against him after taking office.

Two weeks ago, Pruitt announced the abrupt retirement of the head of his EPA security staff, whom Pruitt had blamed for much of his high security spending,

Despite the mounting investigations, President Donald Trump has said he supports Pruitt. Asked Friday if he still had confidence in the EPA chief, Trump told reporters, "I do."

At one of the House hearings last month, Pruitt spoke broadly of taking responsibility for changes at his agency, and said he had "made changes" in his practice of first- and business-class travel. EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox did not respond to a question Tuesday on whether Pruitt was now flying coach.

On the policy side, Pruitt has demonstrated his commitment to the Trump administration's cause of cutting regulation, especially rules that businesses call burdensome.

Last week, Pruitt announced changes in enforcement of the landmark Clean Air Act that critics said would give industries more say. On Monday, he announced a new "Office of Continuous Improvement" that he said would oversee speedy handling on permit requests, environmental violations and other matters.

The House oversight committee, the EPA's inspector general and the GAO all are investigating various allegations against Pruitt or his administration at EPA. The latest was announced Tuesday, when Democratic lawmakers released a letter from the agency's inspector general initiating a probe into Pruitt's use of multiple email accounts, and the agency's compliance with requests for records under the federal Freedom of Information Act.

New York Times

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/climate/scott-pruitt-epa-hearing.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FEnvironmental%20Protection%20Agency&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection

Scott Pruitt on Capitol Hill: Round 3 in Progress

By Lisa Friedman, 5/16/18, Updated: 9:40 AM

WASHINGTON — Scott Pruitt, the Environmental Protection Agency administrator, returned to Capitol Hill on Wednesday and was expected to field more tough questions from lawmakers about allegations of ethical abuses and excessive spending.

The hearing, before the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on the environment, is Mr. Pruitt's third congressional appearance in a month. It is the first opportunity, though, for senators to ask Mr. Pruitt about his first-class travel, his renting of a \$50-a-night condo from the wife of a lobbyist with business before the agency and other issues that have become the subject of a series of investigations into Mr. Pruitt's stewardship of the agency. His earlier appearances were in the House.

This week, a 12th investigation was announced, this one examining Mr. Pruitt's use of E.P.A. email addresses that he did not disclose, lawmakers said on Tuesday.

Here's what to watch for as Mr. Pruitt testifies.

What the Democrats are likely to ask

Democrats intend, as they did last month, to throw the kitchen sink at Mr. Pruitt. And they have plenty to ask about.

In the three weeks since Mr. Pruitt testified before the two House committees, the public has learned that the administrator has allowed lobbyists and Washington power brokers to arrange his foreign travel, that Mr. Pruitt's aggressive effort to shroud his meetings and speaking engagements in secrecy was done primarily to avoid uncomfortable and unexpected questions and not out of a concern for security as his staff had claimed, and that E.P.A. aides took steps to conceal a dinner Mr. Pruitt held in Rome with Cardinal George Pell last year after they learned that the cardinal had been charged with sexual abuse.

That's in addition to a raft of other longstanding questions about Mr. Pruitt's first-class travel and the need for a 24-hour security detail of at least 20 people that has cost taxpayers more than \$3 million so far.

Senator Tom Udall of New Mexico, the top Democrat on the panel, said Wednesday that he had asked the investigative arm of Congress, the Government Accountability Office, to investigate whether the E.P.A. acted improperly when it appeared to mock Democrats on Twitter after the Senate voted to confirm the agency's second-in-command, Andrew Wheeler.

The tweet, sent from the agency's official account on April 13, said, "The Senate does its duty: Andrew Wheeler confirmed by Senate as deputy administrator of @EPA. The Democrats couldn't block the confirmation of environmental policy expert and former EPA staffer under both a Republican and a Democrat president." Mr. Udall asked the accountability office to issue a legal opinion on whether the tweet violated the Antideficiency Act, which prohibits the use of federal funds for publicity or propaganda.

"This communication did nothing to further the public's understanding of the environment or public health — and as an act of pure partisan taunting, the case is clear for why it represents a violation of federal law," Mr. Udall said in a statement, adding, "We can add this investigation to the ever-expanding list of Scott Pruitt's ethical transgressions."

What Republicans are expected to talk about

This one is tougher. Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, chairwoman of the appropriations committee's environment panel, called for Mr. Pruitt to testify at a time when Republican support for Mr. Pruitt appeared to be on a downswing. Since then, however, Republicans have tamped down criticism of the E.P.A. chief.

One notable exception is Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa.

Mr. Grassley on Tuesday threatened to be the first Republican to call on Mr. Pruitt to resign, citing his frustration with the administrator over waivers the E.P.A. has given to small fuel refineries exempting them from a federal ethanol mandate on the nation's gasoline. While Mr. Grassley is not a member of the committee that Mr. Pruitt will face, his concerns are shared by other corn-state Republicans and could become an issue at the hearing.

If past is prologue, though, Mr. Pruitt is likely to hear Republicans express concerns about his stewardship of E.P.A. in their opening statements but mostly draw attention to the regulatory rollbacks that they, and many of their constituents, support.

What Pruitt is expected to say

Last time around, Mr. Pruitt repeatedly shifted blame to members of his staff for the spending and ethical issues dogging him.

He said his chief of staff, Ryan Jackson, had been solely responsible for giving \$72,000 in raises to two aides who previously worked with Mr. Pruitt in Oklahoma. He said career staff members had signed off on spending \$43,000 to install a secure phone booth, an expense that was ultimately found to violate federal law. And he said his security detail had insisted he fly first class for his own protection.

In one exchange with Representative Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico, Mr. Pruitt had to be asked three times if he was the E.P.A. administrator before answering in the affirmative, but avoided answering whether the buck stopped with him.

"That's not a yes or no answer," Mr. Pruitt replied then. It's a safe bet Mr. Pruitt will continue to tread as carefully Wednesday, and the E.P.A. spokesman, Jahan Wilcox, said in a statement that Mr. Pruitt remained focused on policy.

"From advocating to leave the Paris Accord, working to repeal Obama's Clean Power Plan and Waters of the United States, declaring a war on lead and cleaning up toxic Superfund sites, Administrator Pruitt is focused on advancing President Trump's agenda of regulatory certainty and environmental stewardship," Mr. Wilcox said.

Where the president stands

President Trump has remained steadfast in his support for Mr. Pruitt, despite the arguments of several White House aides — including John F. Kelly, the president's chief of staff — that the administrator should be fired. Asked last week if he still had confidence in Mr. Pruitt, the president replied, "I do."

Reuters

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-epa-pruitt/epa-chief-to-face-fresh-questions-about-spending-in-senate-hearing-idUSKCN1IH1AT>

EPA chief to face fresh questions about spending in senate hearing

5/16/18, 7:04 AM

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt will testify in front of a Senate subcommittee on Wednesday about his agency's budget, exposing him to fresh questions about his travel and security spending.

Pruitt has been under pressure from mainly Democratic lawmakers in recent weeks over a series of controversies ranging from his use of first-class travel to his 24/7 security detail and costly office renovations - but has retained the support of President Donald Trump and most Republicans for his efforts at EPA to roll back regulations characterized as obstacles to industry.

Pruitt is scheduled to appear before the 13-member Senate Appropriations Committee's subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies on Wednesday morning regarding the EPA's 2019 budget - which Trump has proposed to cut by a fourth.

Most of the committee's six Democratic members have been vocal opponents of Pruitt's regulatory rollbacks at EPA and have criticized him for alleged ethical missteps while in office related to his spending and his lease of a room in a Washington condo linked to an energy lobbyist.

The controversies have triggered 12 investigations by the EPA's inspector general, congressional committees and the White House.

Several Democrats on the subcommittee, including Senator Diane Feinstein and Senator Patrick Leahy, have called for Pruitt's resignation.

He has also faced growing pressure from some Republican senators not on the panel over his handling of U.S. biofuels policy.

Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa, for example, said on Tuesday he would join the chorus of lawmakers calling for Pruitt's ouster unless the EPA chief rolls back the agency's use of waivers exempting refineries from their obligation to mix ethanol into fuel.

Separately, the House Energy and Commerce Committee is scheduled to interview EPA Assistant Administrator Bill Wehrum on Wednesday morning about efforts to ease air pollution permitting for power plants and industrial facilities.

Wehrum, whose office also runs the biofuels program, is likely to have to field questions about the EPA's handling of biofuels regulations - including the administration's proposals to tweak them in a way that reduces costs for refiners.

Washington Examiner

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/epas-scott-pruitt-given-extension-to-file-financial-disclosure>

EPA's Scott Pruitt given extension to file financial disclosure

By Josh Siegel, 5/16/18, 3:08 PM

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt did not file his financial disclosure form for 2018 when it was due Tuesday because he was granted an extension.

Federal employees were required by law to file their financial disclosure forms by Tuesday, but Pruitt was among 70 EPA employees who requested and were granted an extension for up to 90 days.

The EPA has 366 employees who are required to file the annual public financial disclosure form.

"EPA may grant extensions of up to 90 additional days for good cause. This year more than 70 employees have requested and been granted a filing extension. Administrator Pruitt was one of the employees who sought and was granted an extension," Kevin Minoli, EPA's designated agency ethics official said in a statement to the Washington Examiner.

EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said it's common for EPA administrators to ask for extensions. Pruitt filed last year's disclosure form on time.

"Historically, prior EPA administrators, including those in the previous administration, have also regularly sought and received extensions," Wilcox told the Washington Examiner.

The timing of the extension for Pruitt is sure to draw scrutiny, as he is the subject of 12 federal investigations involving his spending, travel, hiring, security, and housing.

The probes are looking at Pruitt's \$50-per-night condo rental with the wife of an energy lobbyist, J. Steven Hart, who had business before the EPA, and reports of lobbyists who helped plan some of Pruitt's foreign trips, among other issues.

Federal officials are required to report gifts worth more than \$375.

Minoli said last said month he did not have all the facts when he ruled that the condo lease agreement reflected fair market value and did not violate federal gift rules.

Pruitt, from late February to early August of last year, paid \$50 per night for a single bedroom in the Capitol Hill condo. He was charged only for the nights he stayed there.

Minoli said he did not evaluate Hart's business interests, or his firm's, when making his determination that the condo was not a gift.

Pruitt on Wednesday acknowledged that one of his top aides helped him search for housing last year, a potential violation of federal law, but said she had done so "on personal time."

The Washington Post reported last month that Pruitt directed Millan Hupp, who serves as the EPA's head of scheduling and advance, to help locate local apartment rentals for him last summer.

Pruitt, in testimony before a subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, referred to Hupp as "a longtime friend."

He said he did not pay her for helping him find housing.

Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M, who asked questions about the arrangement, noted that employees of federal officials are prohibited from providing free service to their bosses.

"Then, that's a gift, that's a violation of federal law," Udall said.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387995-pruitt-granted-extension-to-file-his-financial-disclosure-form>

Pruitt granted extension to file financial disclosure form

By Miranda Green, 5/16/18, 2:24 PM

Federal employees were required to submit their financial disclosure forms Tuesday, but Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt's was not one of them.

Pruitt is among 70 EPA employees who requested and was granted a filing extension by the EPA, an agency spokesperson confirmed Wednesday.

Currently 366 employees at the EPA are required to file the annual public financial disclosure forms that list any outside work they do to ensure that there are no conflicts. At the agency, candidates and appointed special government employees must fill out a detailed form annually.

"EPA may grant extensions of up to 90 additional days for good cause. This year more than 70 employees have requested and been granted a filing extension. Administrator Pruitt was one of the employees who sought and was granted an extension," Kevin Minoli, the EPA's designated agency ethics official, said in a statement to The Hill.

Last year, Pruitt listed assets from his job as Oklahoma attorney general prior to starting at the EPA in February, as well as various incomes from bonds, trusts and his home mortgage.

EPA spokesperson Jahan Wilcox said that it was not uncommon for EPA administrators to ask for extensions.

"Historically, prior EPA Administrators, including those in the previous administration, have also regularly sought and received extensions," Wilcox said in a statement.

Public financial disclosure forms show that Gina McCarthy, an EPA administrator during the Obama administration, utilized a 90 day extension for her 2015 disclosure.

Pruitt testified earlier Wednesday in front of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee where he was asked various questions related to controversies about his spending and ethics — including a decision last summer to rent a \$50-a-night condo from the wife of a notable energy lobbyist whom Pruitt called a friend.

At least one other political aide at the EPA has been criticized for failing to file a financial disclosure form during his time at the agency. Kevin Chmielewski, the former deputy chief of staff of operations at the EPA turned whistleblower, did not fill out a form during his time there, according to a ProPublica report.

Failure to file can be a potentially serious offense that has in past cases lead to judicial action.

Washington Examiner

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/senate-democrats-prod-john-barrasso-to-hold-hearing-on-pruitt-scandals>

Senate Democrats prod John Barrasso to hold hearing on Pruitt scandals

By John Siciliano, 5/15/18, 5:45 PM

Senate Democrats are prodding the Republican leadership to hold a special oversight hearing on Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt's lavish travel expenses, retaliation against staff, and a laundry list of other ethical concerns.

Six Democrats sent a letter to Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman John Barrasso, R-Wyo., on Tuesday, asking him to hold the hearing.

"In light of Administrator Pruitt's testimony last Thursday before two House subcommittees and planned appearance in front of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee [Wednesday], we believe that the proper execution of our committee's responsibilities demands that he appear before us as soon as possible," the letter states.

The letter, led by Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware, the top Democrat on the committee, said Pruitt has been before the committee fewer times than any other panel, despite its direct role in overseeing the EPA.

"Administrator Pruitt has not testified before our committee on EPA's FY 2019 budget; in fact, he never testified on its FY 2018 budget," the Democrats wrote.

Pruitt's testimony was taken in the "most charitable light," depicting an EPA administrator who has "failed to exert any oversight over his staff as they have, as he testified, spent exorbitant funds and made impactful personnel decisions without his knowledge or approval."

The senators added that Pruitt's "willingness to pass blame on to everyone around him, including career staff and his top political aides, shows that he is either unwilling or unable to lead."

The Democrats added that much of Pruitt's testimony before the House was quickly contradicted by press reports, EPA documents, "and even his own prior testimony before Congress."

They listed a number of concerns that they would like to look into, but they say they are most concerned about Pruitt's travel that was planned by business interests.

"This pattern of allowing private business interests to dictate the administrator's international travel warrants further inquiry by this committee," the letter stated. The two destinations of particular concern include his trip last year to Morocco and a planned, but canceled, trip to Australia. Both were planned by lobbyists.

"While we may disagree on the policy choices made by Administrator Pruitt, we hope we can agree that Cabinet officials of any party owe Congress clear and truthful answers to questions and should be held to the highest ethical standards as Administrator Pruitt himself acknowledged last week," the Democrats said.

"Your Republican colleagues on and off this committee, as well as those in the House, have already called upon Administrator Pruitt to testify," the senators added. "We hope you share this view, and look forward to working with you to ensure that the mismanagement currently plaguing EPA is rectified promptly and effectively."

The Intercept

<https://theintercept.com/2018/05/16/scott-pruitt-epa-industry-lobbyists/>

Scott Pruitt's Policy Director at EPA Met with Hundreds of Industry Representatives, Emails Show

By Sharon Lerner, 5/16/18, 1:25 PM

A CACHE OF internal Environmental Protection Agency communications shows that the embattled agency administrator Scott Pruitt isn't the only one who has been in frequent contact with the industries that the environmental agency is supposed to regulate. Samantha Dravis, who was the EPA's senior counsel and director of its Office of Policy until she resigned last month, had more than 90 scheduled meetings with representatives of energy and manufacturing companies, trade associations, agricultural interests, car makers, and other industry groups between March of 2017 and January of this year, according to emails that were made public as a result of a lawsuit filed by the Sierra Club. During that time, those same documents show Dravis having only one scheduled meeting with a representative of an environmental or public health organization.

Some of the regulated groups that sought meetings were the beneficiaries of relaxed EPA regulations. After a court ruled in April 2017 that operators of large animal farming facilities must report how much animal waste they release, several agricultural industry groups met with the EPA. If it had been implemented, the decision would have not only cost the industry millions of dollars, but it also would have put a spotlight on the serious health and environmental impact of waste from factory farms — and big ag was worried. Representatives of the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association, National Pork Producers Council, United Egg Producers, National Turkey Federation, American Farm Bureau Federation, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Milk Producers Federation, and National Council of Farmer Cooperatives sought

a meeting with Dravis to express their concerns. According to the emails, they got the meeting on July 11 at the EPA's headquarters in Washington.

Within three months, the agricultural organizations' concerns were addressed. Although the court didn't change its opinion, the EPA came up with a way for the industry to bypass the requirements it had imposed. In the past, the agency had insisted that animal waste must be reported. And an EPA inspector general's report from September 2017 emphasized the urgency of documenting how much air pollution was coming out of industrial animal farms. But interim guidelines the EPA released on October 26 showed an about-face. The new policy would exempt the animal farms from reporting requirements. "EPA is working diligently to address undue regulatory burden on American farmers," said Pruitt at the time. And in final guidance that the agency issued just a few weeks ago, farms were exempted from the reporting requirements.

Wish Lists

The EPA describes the Office of Policy as "the primary policy arm of EPA," which itself has the mission of protecting human health and the environment. People who have worked in the policy office in previous administrations say that the director usually meets with a mix of people who represent environmental and health concerns as well as industry. "What's not at all typical is the fact that it's so one-sided," said George Wyeth, who worked in the EPA policy office from 1998 to 2014 and is currently a visiting scholar at the George Washington University Law School. "This is simply industry trying to get access to decision makers at as high a level as possible."

The emails released by the Sierra Club do not include descriptions or notes from the meetings. In most cases, the meetings are simply noted as additions to Dravis's calendar and thus may have ultimately been rescheduled or canceled. Nor do the emails include Dravis' internal communications with other EPA staff members. And because the EPA is expected to release more documents in response to the lawsuit soon, Dravis may have received or sent additional emails that have not been made public.

During the 10-month period represented in the emails, Dravis had scheduled meetings with hundreds of industry representatives to discuss their wish lists and pet peeves. Some of the meetings involved several companies and associations, such as one in May in which water quality criteria, air permit streamlining, and other issues were on the agenda. Twenty groups, including the Vinyl Institute, the Fertilizer Institute, the American Coatings Association, and the National Oilseed Processors Association were scheduled to attend.

But while the emails show Dravis having scheduled face-to-face meetings with a parade of lobbyists and business people and getting together on several occasions with far-right policy groups — as well as with at least one consumer group, an organization representing public utilities, and a contingent of labor leaders — they contain only one record of a meeting with a representative of an environmental, health, or community organization during the 10-month period. John Walke, director of the Climate and Clean Air program at the Natural Resources Defense Council, was supposed to meet with Dravis on December 11. Walke told The Intercept that Dravis had reached out to set up the meeting, and then later cancelled it. He said two subsequent meetings were also cancelled.

Though it was not reflected in the released documents, Dravis was also present at a June 2017 meeting that Pruitt attended with 13 health organizations, including the American Lung Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and Physicians for Social Responsibility, a public health group focused on addressing climate change and eradicating nuclear weapons. The EPA touted its interactions with each of the groups when asked about Pruitt's close ties to industry, but failed to mention that they were all at the same meeting. Jeff Carter, executive director of Physicians for Social Responsibility who attended the meeting, recalled it as "very brief" and said that participants were asked not to take notes.

Many of the meetings and calls detailed in Dravis's emails were to discuss specific policies and existing agreements with the EPA that companies found burdensome. Noble Energy, which according to the emails scheduled a meeting with Dravis for May 5, 2017, wanted to discuss air quality and ozone. The EPA had previously cited Noble for violations of the Clean Air Act and struck an agreement with the company that is in the process of being implemented.

Similarly, Dravis had a call with a representative of the Four Corners Power Plant, according to the records. The plant was facing a deadline for complying with an agreement it reached with the EPA in 2015. Four Corners, a coal-burning facility located on a Navajo reservation near the Arizona-New Mexico border, is one of the biggest polluters in the country, emitting more than 11 million tons of carbon dioxide yearly, contributing to air pollution that is so concentrated it can be seen from outer space. The agreement required the company to “ensure protection of tribal air resources” by installing new technology to reduce its emissions. The last of the improvements were scheduled to be completed by July of this year.

But the company that operates the plant, APS, seems to have had a problem with some of the changes it had been asked to make, according to a note that Megan Berge wrote to Dravis. Berge, an attorney with the firm Baker Botts, wrote that APS, “is concerned with certain monitoring requirements that restrict plant operations.” The two subsequently had a call to discuss the company’s concerns last April, according to the documents.

Reached for comment, Berge wrote that “we meet with regulators from federal, state and local government and agencies on a routine basis on behalf of our clients. As these meetings involve client matters I am not able to speak on their behalf.”

In an email, Suzanne Treviño, communications consultant for APS, wrote that “APS routinely engages with agency personnel on regulatory issues, and in this instance, with no Region 9 Administrator, we contacted EPA Headquarters to discuss monitoring methodology for particulate matter emissions from the Four Corners Power Plant. Discussions were on methodology for monitoring particulate matter emissions, and did not involve changing or relaxing regulatory standards or permitting limits. Four Corners Power Plant continues to maintain compliance with the EPA particulate matter emission standards, Four Corners Federal Implementation Plan, and the plant’s operating permit.”

The citizens who are affected by the pollution from the plant didn’t get the chance to tell Dravis about their concerns, however. Had they done so, Dravis might have heard about ongoing health problems due to poor air quality in the area. San Juan County, New Mexico, where the plant is located, has higher incidences of chronic respiratory diseases than the rest of the state and country.

“The entire region is shrouded in ozone,” said Mike Eisenfeld, energy and climate program manager of the San Juan Citizens Alliance, which advocates for the protection of natural resources in the area. Expressing a sense of futility that other health and environmental advocates contacted for this story seemed to share, Eisenfeld said his group didn’t attempt to meet with the EPA. “We didn’t feel there was a point,” said Eisenfeld. “We just feel like EPA and the department of the interior — it’s getting harder and harder to get any real answers or feel like we have a relationship at all.”

Many companies raised concerns to Dravis related to the Clean Water Act. Dravis, who began serving as the EPA’s senior counsel in 2017, despite have graduated from law school just five years earlier, was faced with complex arguments related to the law, from the National Association of Home Builders and the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries. In May 2017, the American Iron and Steel Institute presented Dravis with a brief that delved into permitting requirements under the law. While it’s not clear how she responded to their arguments, Dravis’s emails reveal that she signed up for a class in December that would provide an overview of the law.

According to her resume, before coming to the EPA, Dravis worked as policy director and general counsel for the Republican Attorneys General Association, which Pruitt had recently chaired. Before that, she was legal counsel for Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce, a group that has been described as “the Koch brothers’ secret bank.” Dravis also served as the president of the Rule of Law Defense Fund, which Pruitt chaired.

Dravis also held several meetings with industry to discuss the fuel standards known as the Corporate Average Fuel Economy, including one with a lobbyist representing Arconic, a company that manufactures aluminum parts for the auto industry. Russell Thomasson, an executive vice president at Cassidy and Associates, “worked for Cornyn for a long time until I decided to headed [sic] to the swamp,” Thomasson wrote to Dravis, when requesting the meeting in April 2017.

Thomasson confirmed that the meeting took place, but declined to say whether Arconic got what it wanted from it. “We don’t comment on behalf of our clients,” he wrote in an email.

Last month, the EPA announced it would be abandoning the stricter fuel standards that had been put in place by former President Barack Obama.

While President Donald Trump promised to drain the swamp of lobbyists, Dravis seemed to have spent much of her time interacting with people from a number of lobbying firms, including Squire Patton Boggs, Playmakers Strategies, Keller and Heckman, the BGR Group, American Capitol Group, Sonoran Policy Group, Valis Associates, and Gordley Associates.

The emails show breaks from her scheduled meetings in June, when she traveled with Scott Pruitt to Rome, where he visited Vatican City and met with executives from DuPont, Chemours, and 3M. In December, Dravis and several other EPA staffers accompanied Pruitt to Morocco on a trip that was partly arranged by a lobbyist, according to the Washington Post.

Although the most recent emails obtained through the lawsuit are from January, it’s clear that Dravis did meet with the NRDC’s Walke in February. Walke had arranged to meet with other EPA staffers, and when they heard he had been unable to meet with Dravis, they brought her into the meeting. Walke described the encounter, at which they discussed an industry-focused program called Smart Sectors, as cordial.

@EPA

Today @EPAScottPruitt met with stakeholders participating in #EPASmartSectors to discuss regulatory reform and innovation in the private sector. EPA is committed to working collaboratively inside and outside of the Agency to improve environmental outcomes for the American people.

But when Walke suggested that they make public the interactions EPA was having with industry through Smart Sectors, the EPA staff demurred. “I said, ‘Why don’t you create a docket to show you have nothing to hide? That way, whenever you receive something from industry, you can just dump it into the docket so everyone can see that everything’s above board,’” Walke said. “They said, ‘We’ll get back to you about that.’”

They didn’t get back to him. And when Walke followed up, he was told that if he wanted that information, he’d have to get it through a Freedom of Information Act request.

In April, in response to allegations from Democratic Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware, the EPA’s inspector general opened an investigation into Dravis’s alleged failure to show up for much of the period between November 2017 and January 2018, while she was being paid as a full-time employee. Dravis, who declined to comment or answer questions on the record for this article, has denied those allegations, as has the EPA, which did not respond to requests for comment.

Dravis is being replaced in the EPA’s top policy job by Brittany Bolen, a former staffer for congressional Republicans, who is 30 years old and graduated from law school five years ago. Dravis is reportedly looking for a government relations job in the private sector.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/udall-asks-gao-to-look-into-political-epa-tweet-1230380>

Udall asks GAO to look into political EPA tweet

By Anthony Adragna, 5/16/18, 10:07 AM

Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) announced this morning he'd asked the Government Accountability Office to investigate whether EPA violated the law with an April 13 tweet from the agency's official account bashing Democrats for delays in confirming Deputy Administrator Andrew Wheeler.

In addition, Udall said the government's Office of Special Counsel is looking into whether the tweet violated the Hatch Act, which limits political involvement by federal employees.

"These two investigations into EPA's single tweet encapsulate a running theme: a disregard for ethics and a disregard for taxpayer dollars," Udall, top Democrat on the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees EPA spending, said.

The tweet in question said: "The Senate does its duty: Andrew Wheeler confirmed by Senate as deputy administrator of @EPA. The Democrats couldn't block the confirmation of environmental policy expert and former EPA staffer under both a Republican and a Democrat president."

GAO is already looking into whether Pruitt's appearance in an industry video calling for public comments on efforts to repeal the Waters of the U.S. regulation violated the law.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/article/2018/05/emails-show-pruitt-pushing-red-team-blue-team-climate-debate-543613>

Emails show Pruitt pushing 'red team-blue team' climate debate

By Alex Guillen and Anthony Adragna, 5/15/18, 6:39 PM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt had hoped at least twice last year to announce his plans for a controversial red team-blue team debate that would take aim at a federal assessment supporting climate change science, according to newly released emails.

Pruitt's contentious review was abandoned because of the White House's objections, but the communications reveal new details about how the process would have worked and who was influencing Pruitt.

Many scientists have complained that a red team-blue team style debate was a poor way to examine the scientific evidence that overwhelmingly supports the findings that humans are the primary driver behind climate change. But for Pruitt, who had once suggested the event might be televised, the debate appeared to be directed at rebuffing the Fourth National Climate Assessment.

That government-wide report issued on Nov. 3 contradicted many Trump administration political appointees who have questioned the connection between greenhouse gas pollution and global warming.

A draft press release that circulated on Nov. 4 among top EPA officials, and which was shared with Pruitt on Nov. 5, laid out the line of attack, according to the documents made public on Tuesday by EPA following a records request from the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"EPA is standing up a Red Team peer review of the report," they wrote, while the "blue team" would essentially be the federal assessment and its authors.

"A robust, transparent public peer review evaluation of climate change is something everyone should support," Pruitt said in the unreleased November statement. "Now is a perfect opportunity for the formation of a 'Red Team' exercise."

The draft release also included space for quotes from two prominent climate science critics: Steve Koonin, an Obama-era Energy Department official, and William Happer, a Princeton physicist who argues that increased carbon dioxide would benefit the planet.

The duo appear to have been tapped to help guide the red-team review together.

"Your contributions even in a small way to the validity of the red team blue team approach would be appreciated," Ryan Jackson, Pruitt's chief of staff, wrote to Koonin and Happer on Nov. 4.

In an email to POLITICO, Happer said the exercise was "badly needed," while Koonin, now the director of the Center for Urban Science and Progress at New York University, told POLITICO the National Climate Assessment was "demonstrably deficient on a number of points."

EPA did not return a request for comment.

Pruitt has previously said a Wall Street Journal piece written by Koonin in April 2017 calling for a similar EPA review of climate science was his inspiration for instigating the "red team" review.

The emails, however, show that Koonin and his allies began wooing Pruitt even before that. In an email more than a week before Koonin's WSJ piece ran, Dan Yergin, the Pulitzer-winning oil historian and vice chairman of IHS Markit who joined a board advising President Donald Trump, introduced Koonin by email to Jackson.

Pruitt and Koonin met April 28, and the emails show Koonin was closely involved in the process afterward.

Koonin sent EPA a "prospectus" outlining the exercise, and though much of it was redacted by EPA before its release, Koonin suggested timing the red team review to the National Climate Assessment, which was due out six months later. Doing so would "ensure that certainties and uncertainties in projections of future climates are accurately presented to the public and decision makers," he wrote.

A revised version of the prospectus was circulated by EPA to White House officials in July after news of Pruitt's plans had leaked.

"There are a lot of press reports about EPA's planning on this. None of it is being run by us. This seems to be getting out of control," wrote Michael Catanzaro, a top energy adviser to Trump who has since left the administration, a few days after receiving Koonin's proposal.

In late June, Liz Bowman, then a top EPA spokeswoman, questioned whether the exercise could be announced as early as July 5 or 6. But it wasn't until November that top Pruitt staffers began circulating a draft press release on the announcement.

A draft of the announcement on Nov. 5 inspired a lengthy email chain, which EPA redacted, that involved direct messages from Trump chief of staff John Kelly, strategic communications director Mercedes Schlapp, and former White House staff secretary Rob Porter.

Pruitt was touting his plans to launch the red team review as late as December. Emails early in that month indicate the agency's air chief, Bill Wehrum, would make the announcement on Dec. 12 while Pruitt traveled in Morocco. One message that included Jackson had the subject line of "Red Team/Blue Team Announcement Planned for Tuesday, Dec. 12."

The New York Times reported in March that Kelly and other top officials stopped the announcement in the fall, and Kelly's deputy Rick Dearborn met with Pruitt in mid-December to declare the plan dead.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/blogs/in-the-know/in-the-know/388003-schwarzenegger-to-pruitt-drink-contaminated-water-until-you-tap>

Schwarzenegger to Pruitt: Drink contaminated water 'until you tap out or resign'

By Jacqueline Thomsen, 5/16/18, 2:40 PM

Arnold Schwarzenegger tweeted a jab at Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt on Wednesday after reports that the EPA intervened to stop the publication of a federal study that would have set stricter levels for toxic chemicals in drinking water.

"I'm a simple guy so I have a simple remedy when people like Pruitt ignore or hide pollution: if you don't have a problem with Americans drinking contaminated drinking water, drink it yourself until you tap out or resign," Schwarzenegger tweeted.

I'm a simple guy so I have a simple remedy when people like Pruitt ignore or hide pollution: if you don't have a problem with Americans drinking contaminated drinking water, drink it yourself until you tap out or resign.

<https://t.co/RwPpGjPthE>

— Arnold (@Schwarzenegger) May 16, 2018

The former California governor's suggestion follows the release of internal Trump administration emails this week that showed EPA officials were concerned about a public relations "nightmare" that could stem from another agency's expected plans to increase standards for fluorine in water.

Their suggestion would raise safe levels for the chemicals to be almost six times stricter than the current EPA suggested standard. Politico first reported on the emails on Monday.

Fluorine chemicals are used in products like hoses to reduce emissions for vehicles and stain resistance for clothing, but are also associated with major health risks including kidney and testicular cancer.

Pruitt is facing several probes for a number of ethics issues, including his use of first-class travel, his rental of a condo co-owned by the wife of a then-lobbyist and his use of private email accounts for official EPA business. He is already under pressure to resign from some critics because of those issues.

Pruitt, testifying before senators on Wednesday, said that some of the decisions leading to the scandals were not handled properly.

"There have been decisions over the last 16 months or so that, as I look back on those decisions, I would not make the same decisions again," he said.

Washington Examiner

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/scott-pruitt-faces-a-dozen-investigations-with-new-probe-of-email-accounts>

Scott Pruitt faces a dozen investigations with new probe of email accounts

By Josh Siegel, 5/15/18, 6:29 PM

The Environmental Protection Agency's internal watchdog is opening an investigation into Administrator Scott Pruitt's use of multiple email addresses and whether federal records requests are searching all of his accounts.

The EPA's inspector general confirmed the probe in a letter to Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., who requested it and made public the impending investigation on Tuesday.

There are now 12 federal investigations involving Pruitt's spending, ethics, hiring, and security decisions, including the latest one.

On Wednesday, Pruitt is scheduled to testify in the Senate about his fiscal 2019 budget priorities, but lawmakers likely will grill him about his numerous scandals involving excess spending, lobbyists planning trips abroad, and big pay raises for his favored staff.

The email issue is perhaps the tamest of the probes.

Democratic senators revealed last month that the EPA has four email addresses for Pruitt.

The agency recently said it is reviewing all of its Freedom of Information Act responses under Pruitt to ensure they included all his email accounts.

The agency was responding to a request from Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., the chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, who sought more information on the email accounts.

Having several secondary accounts has become common practice by administrators because of the high volume of emails received by their primary account, the EPA has said in defending Pruitt.

The agency's inspector general also investigated President Barack Obama's first EPA chief, Lisa Jackson, who used a secondary account under the name "Richard Windsor" for official business.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/387863-epa-watchdog-announces-new-probe-into-pruitts-emails>

EPA watchdog announces new probe into Pruitt's emails

By Luis Sanchez, 5/15/18, 7:07 PM

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) inspector general said it is investigating EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's use of nonpublic email accounts, the latest in a series of federal investigations into the agency chief.

The inspector general, an independent office within the EPA, will look into whether Pruitt is keeping a record of his emails, as he is mandated to by federal law, and whether the EPA is searching all his accounts when fulfilling public records requests.

Members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee — ranking member Tom Carper (D-Del.) and Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) — released a letter dated May 2 that confirmed the investigation.

Past EPA administrators also used nonpublic email accounts for everyday communication, according to Politico.

The latest probe comes as Pruitt faces scrutiny over ethical and spending controversies. It also ups the total number of federal investigations into the administrator's behavior to a dozen.

Past controversies with Pruitt involved his high-cost travel, use of security personnel, and a \$50-a-night condo he rented from the wife of an energy lobbyist whom he later met with.

In a letter responding to Merkley, EPA Inspector General Arthur Elkins said he does not know yet when the investigation into Pruitt's email accounts would begin because of funding restraints.

Politico

<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/05/15/pruitt-epa-email-watchdog-544462>

EPA watchdog launches new probe into Pruitt's email habits

By Anthony Adragna, 5/15/18, 6:18 PM

EPA's inspector general said Tuesday it would look into Scott Pruitt's use of nonpublic email accounts, bringing the number of federal probes into the EPA administrator's behavior to an even dozen.

Specifically, the inspector general said it would look into whether Pruitt is properly preserving email records as required under federal law and whether the agency is properly searching all of his accounts in response to public records requests.

Two senior Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Democrats — ranking member Tom Carper of Delaware and Jeff Merkley of Oregon — released the letter, dated May 2, confirming the probe.

EPW Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) has previously raised concerns about Pruitt's use of nonpublic email accounts. In response, the agency said it searches all of his accounts when responding to public records requests. Previous EPA administrators also routinely used nonpublic accounts for day-to-day email communications.

The new probe comes as Pruitt faces a litany of questions surrounding his spending and ethical woes. EPA's inspector general, the Government Accountability Office and the House Oversight Committee are all looking into aspects of his conduct.

Those probes involve Pruitt's first-class travel, use of security on personal trips, pay for top political aides and a sweetheart condo deal with an energy lobbyist who later met with him, among others.

In the letter, EPA Inspector General Arthur Elkins warned that a stretched budget and staff meant he could not say when the probe would begin.

"The fact is that the OIG has been funded at less than the levels we deem adequate to do all of the work that should be done, and we therefore have to make difficult decisions about whether to accept any given potential undertaking," he said. "However, despite these constraints, we have determined that the issues raised in your letter are within the authority of the OIG to review, and we will do so."

Pruitt is set to appear before a Senate Appropriations subpanel Wednesday.

AP

<https://apnews.com/17b4a723a64642a5a5d96be90eccf7c2/EPA-inspector-general-investigating-Pruitt-email-accounts>

EPA inspector general investigating Pruitt email accounts

By Ellen Knickmeyer, 5/15/18

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency's inspector general is opening an investigation into Administrator Scott Pruitt's use of multiple email accounts.

Inspector General Arthur Elkins said in a letter released Tuesday that his office will review the matter, the latest in a series of federal investigations of Pruitt's travel, security and spending and other issues.

The request for the email investigation came from Democratic Sens. Tom Carper of Delaware and Jeffrey Merkley of Oregon. Carper released a copy of the IG's response.

The senators asked the IG to review whether Pruitt was complying with federal law and EPA policy when using multiple email accounts and whether all accounts are searched when responding to Freedom of Information Act requests.

EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said Tuesday that the agency does not comment on matters before the inspector general. He referred to a previous statement that EPA has three email accounts for Pruitt, two used by staff for maintaining his calendar and public correspondence and the third for Pruitt himself.

"When we receive a FOIA request all accounts are searched before we respond to the FOIA request," he said.

A House committee and the Government Accountability Office also are conducting investigations and audits related to Pruitt's actions as EPA chief.

Last month, the Republican chairman of a Senate oversight committee, Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming, issued a letter asking Pruitt to disclose all his email addresses and affirm that all were being searched in response to Freedom of Information Act requests.

BN

<https://news.bloombergenvironment.com/environment-and-energy/epa-air-chief-demurs-on-whether-greenhouse-gases-endanger-health>

EPA Air Chief Demurs on Whether Greenhouse Gases Endanger Health

By Amena H Saiyid, 5/16/18, 12:34 PM

The EPA's top air official demurred and deferred to Administrator Scott Pruitt when asked at a May 16 House hearing if he believes that greenhouse gases endanger public health.

"I cannot speak for the administrator, but he has a lot of concerns about the process," William Wehrum, the Environmental Protection Agency's assistant administrator for air and radiation, told Rep. Scott Peters (D-Calif.) at a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee hearing.

Pruitt is concerned that people with differing opinions haven't had a chance to have their voices heard on the Obama EPA's 2009 determination that greenhouse gases are air pollutants that must be regulated, Wehrum said. That finding served as the basis for nearly all the agency's climate regulations.

Pruitt hasn't committed to reviewing the so-called endangerment finding, despite a variety of petitions filed by climate foes to do so. The EPA has no process or schedule in place to address this question, Wehrum said.

The hearing of Energy and Commerce's environment subcommittee was on a draft GOP bill aimed at making an air pollution permit program easier for industry to implement, a priority for Pruitt, Wehrum, and industry.

BNA

<https://news.bloombergenvironment.com/environment-and-energy/bill-on-industrial-emissions-changes-gets-epa-air-chiefs-support>

Bill on Industrial Emissions Changes Gets EPA Air Chief's Support

By Amena H Saiyid, 5/16/18, 12:41 PM

Legislation that would affect how industrial facilities' emissions increases are calculated now has the backing of the top EPA air official, despite the agency's efforts to also pursue regulation.

"The administration didn't have an official position on the bill. I, personally, strongly support the discussion draft," William Wehrum, EPA assistant administrator for air and radiation, told the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment.

The panel is holding a hearing to discuss the draft legislation, which would revise the air pollution permitting program known as New Source Review.

Under this program, facilities such as coal-fired power plants and refineries are required to install modern air pollution controls when renovating or building new facilities that significantly increase annual air emissions.

Changing the program has been a priority of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. Industries required to obtain the permits have long complained the process is too complicated and time consuming.

Bill Details

The draft bill would allow emissions increases from expansions or modifications to be calculated on an hourly basis as opposed to projecting annual increases in air pollution from these modified plants.

It also makes clear that changes that decrease emissions or are the result of restoring, maintaining, or improving the reliability of the plant wouldn't trigger the permitting requirements.

Wehrum said compliance under the existing program is time consuming and complicated and acts as an impediment to companies that want to upgrade their plants to increase productivity.

Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.), the top Democrat on the Energy and Commerce Committee, argued that the bill would allow more air pollution because it would allow facilities to operate for longer hours, increasing annual emissions even if the hourly pollution rates aren't as high.

BNA

http://esweb.bna.com/eslw/display/no_alpha.adp?mode=si&frag_id=134166817&item=408&prod=deln&cat=AGENCY

Pruitt Delivers on Promise to Clean Up Toxic Sites

By Stephen Lee, 5/16/18

Adding six new contaminated sites to the EPA's list of Superfund sites matches up with Administrator Scott Pruitt's "back to basics" message.

The six additions will bring the total number of sites on the National Priorities List—which contains the country's most contaminated sites—to 1,347.

The EPA added sites in Hockessin, Del., Cheraw, S.C., Spencer, Ind., Spring Park, Minn., Dallas, and San Antonio. The agency is also proposing to add sites in Penuelas, P.R., Donnelsville, Ohio, and Grand Prairie, Texas, to the priority list.

Environmental lawyers said the addition of new sites to the Superfund list is consistent with the promises Pruitt has made ever since taking office.

“Right from the get-go, he was adamant that he wanted the core environmental programs to be his priorities,” Bart Seitz, a partner at Baker Botts LLP, told Bloomberg Environment. “A lot of what some conservatives would call mission creep at EPA was taking away from those core programs: clean air, clean water, resource conservation, and Superfund.”

Smaller Sites, Limited Budgets

E. Gail Suchman, an attorney with Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP, said appearances may have also played a role in the EPA's decision to add mostly smaller sites to the Superfund list.

“I think that Pruitt's idea is to focus on certain sites, maybe the smaller ones, maybe the cheaper ones, but to have some quick successes and to show that the EPA is cleaning up toxic pollution,” Suchman, a former enforcement attorney at EPA Region 5 in Chicago, told Bloomberg Environment. “That's not a bad thing; it's a good thing. But it fits in line with his overall strategy.”

The addition of the new sites also highlights an ongoing trend whereby states, facing their own resource constraints, are looking for help from the federal government, Peter Hsiao, an environmental attorney at Morrison Foerster LLP, said.

But because neither the EPA nor Congress has boosted the agency's Superfund budget, there's a limits to how much longer that approach will work, Hsiao told Bloomberg Environment.

“While EPA may say it can do more with less, it undoubtedly will do less with less,” Hsiao said.

Political Considerations at Play?

Some environmental attorneys also floated the notion that Pruitt expanded the list because he wanted to show that the EPA doesn't always accede to the wishes of industry.

The scoring system by which potential sites are evaluated for Superfund eligibility includes some wiggle room to consider sites where local opposition is vocal, Suchman said.

“More often than not, these sites are all referred to EPA by the states, but there's always a bit of political backdrop to how these decisions are made—how they're covered by the press, how well known they are, whether they're close to residential communities that are well organized,” Suchman said.

“I'm sure he's reaping some political benefit from doing this. Maybe it is in part to address recent developments,” Seitz said, referring to the recent string of highly public misconduct allegations leveled against Pruitt. “But despite whatever political spin people might try to ascribe to his motives, I do think he's making a good faith effort to help finish cleanups.”

BNA

http://esweb.bna.com/eslw/display/no_alpha.adp?mode=si&frag_id=134166818&item=408&prod=deln&cat=AGENCY

EPA Commits to Clean Up Six More Superfund Sites

By Stephen Lee, 5/16/18

Six new contaminated sites were added to the EPA's list of those prioritized for cleanup, broadly in keeping with Administrator Scott Pruitt's push to prioritize the Superfund program and clear the list of sites that have languished for years.

The six additions will bring the total number of sites on the National Priorities List—which contains the country's most contaminated sites—to 1,347.

The six additions are:

- Hockessin Groundwater in Hockessin, Del.;
- Burlington Industries Cheraw in Cheraw, S.C.;
- Franklin Street Groundwater Contamination in Spencer, Ind.;
- Spring Park Municipal Well Field in Spring Park, Minn.;
- Lane Plating Works, Inc., in Dallas; and
- River City Metal Finishing in San Antonio.

The EPA is also proposing to add Proteco in Penuelas, Puerto Rico; the Donnelsville Contaminated Aquifer in Donnelsville, Ohio; and Delfasco Forge in Grand Prairie, Texas, to the priority list.

“Having the expertise and resources that the Environmental Protection Agency can bring to bear on this critical issue is the best possible outcome for everyone involved,” Mark Blake, president of the Greater Hockessin Area Development Association, said in an EPA statement.

“EPA is making tremendous progress accelerating sites through the entire Superfund remediation process and returning them to safe and productive reuse,” Pruitt said in the same statement.

AP

<https://apnews.com/68479da5b6b14076a9b66f1be3bf0363/Central-IN-chemical-plume-added-to-Superfund-priority-list>

Central IN chemical plume added to Superfund priority list

5/15/18

SPENCER, Ind. (AP) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has added a groundwater chemical plume that's threatening a central Indiana city's water supply to its highest priority cleanup list for hazardous waste sites.

The EPA said Tuesday that adding the city of Spencer's Franklin Street Groundwater Contamination site to the federal agency's priority list signals its commitment to cleaning up that contamination.

A groundwater plume beneath part of Spencer is tainted with the chlorinated solvent tetrachloroethene, or PCE, and has adversely impacted the city's municipal well field, which provides water to about 9,900 residents.

The contamination's source isn't known.

Spencer's water supply is blended and treated before being distributed to residents in the city about 45 miles southwest of Indianapolis.

Indiana environmental regulators say Spencer's municipal water supply meets Safe Drinking Water Act standards.

Politico

<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/05/16/scott-pruitt-epa-appropriations-committee-hearing-591851>

Senator to Pruitt: EPA meddling in health study 'unconscionable'

By Annie Snider, Alex Guillen, and Anthony Adragna, 5/16/18, 1:14 PM

Senate Democrats tore into Scott Pruitt on Wednesday, blasting the Environmental Protection Agency's meddling in a report on toxic chemicals as "unconscionable" and calling the EPA administrator's mounting ethics controversies an embarrassment to the agency.

"You're trailing a string of ethical lapses and controversies, they're an embarrassment to the agency, an embarrassment to Republicans and Democrats alike," Sen. Pat Leahy (D-Vt.) told Pruitt at a Senate hearing. "Forget about your own ego and your first class travel and your special phone booths and all these things that just make you a laughingstock and your agency a laughingstock."

Pruitt has faced a wave of scandals over the past few months, with scrutiny focused on his expensive flights, round-the-clock security detail, privacy phone booth, and below-market condo rental from an energy lobbyist. With news this week that EPA's Inspector General would look into Pruitt's use of multiple email accounts, he is now facing more than a dozen probes and investigations from Congress, the White House and his agency's internal watchdog.

And earlier this week, POLITICO reported that EPA helped to bury a federal study that would have increased warnings about toxic chemicals found in hundreds of water supplies across the country. That report showed Pruitt's senior aides intervened in the release of the Health and Human Services Department assessment into PFOA and PFOS after the White House warned of a "public relations nightmare."

Leahy said efforts by the White House and political officials at EPA to block the chemicals assessment "unconscionable," and he pointed to a community in his state that is grappling with chemical contamination.

"It's incomprehensible to the people in Bennington and in Vermont why an agency that works for them — their tax dollars are paying for it — whose charge it is to protect their health, turns their back on them and tries to hide health dangers," Leahy said in his opening statement.

West Virginia Republican Sen. Shelley Moore Capito also pressed Pruitt on his agency's intervention on the study, prompting him to deny that he had a hand in it.

"I was not aware that there had been some holding back of the report. I think it is important to have all information in the marketplace," Pruitt said.

Capito encouraged Pruitt to get that study released before an EPA summit on the chemicals next week. "I appreciate the fact that you are trying to reach the scientific limit that would impact any kind of health impacts in our areas, regardless of who has to remediate and what the remediation costs are going to be," she said, alluding to the fact that cleanup requirements would create major costs for the Defense Department and chemicals manufacturers.

Leahy also mocked Pruitt's security concerns as a justification for flying first class for more than a year. "Nobody even knows who you are," he said, adding later, "it's ego run amok."

Much like appearance last month in front of two House panels, Pruitt shifted the blame for many of the recent scandals, blaming "processes" at the agency not being followed for some of his ongoing spending and ethical issues, and he told Senate Appropriators he had taken steps to avoid similar issues going forward.

"There have been decisions over the last 16 or so months, that as I look back, I would not make those same decisions again," Pruitt said. But he stopped short of apologizing, and blamed critics of his deregulation agenda for the negative publicity.

"I want to rectify those going forward," Pruitt continued. "I also want to highlight for you that some of the criticism is unfounded and I think exaggerated. And I think it feeds this division that we've seen around very important issues affecting the environment."

Pruitt also confirmed media reports that he had established a legal defense fund amid the spate of federal investigations. Donations to the fund would be made public pursuant to disclosure requirements and Pruitt said he would not solicit money from lobbyists or corporations with business before the agency. He later noted he would not personally seek contributions himself "since that's done by attorneys and others."

The EPA chief said his attorney "who's done this for a number of years" has worked with Government Accountability Office "to make sure it's done properly."

Despite criticism from lawmakers from both parties and frustration from White House aides, Pruitt has continued to receive the support of President Donald Trump, who's praised the former Oklahoma attorney general for rolling back many of the Obama administration's environmental policies.

Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) pressed Pruitt on his requests that his security detail use his vehicle's lights and sirens to beat Washington traffic and get to a restaurant.

"I don't recall that happening," Pruitt answered. But Udall shot back by referencing an email from Pruitt's former security chief, Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta, that said "Administrator Pruitt encourages the use" of those lights and sirens. POLITICO has reported that Perrotta goaded and encouraged such behavior on security matters.

Udall later accused Pruitt of violating federal law by having an aide search for apartment rentals for him on personal time without being paid. The aide, Millan Hupp, an EPA scheduler and advance staffer who has worked for Pruitt since he was Oklahoma attorney general, is "a long-time friend of my wife and myself," Pruitt said, and she took those actions entirely "on personal time."

"It doesn't cut it that they're a friend or that kind of thing," Udall replied, since federal law requires that any subordinate — even if they volunteer — be paid fair market value for their work or it's considered a gift.

"That's in violation of federal law," Udall said.

Even Sen. Lisa Murkowski, chairwoman of the Appropriations panel hosting Pruitt, said at the start of the hearing she saw "legitimate questions that need to be answered" about the ethics scandals plaguing Administrator Scott Pruitt.

"Unfortunately, I am concerned that many of the important policy efforts that you are engaged in are being overshadowed because of a series of issues related to you and your management of the agency," Murkowski said at the opening the budget hearing.

Udall also peppered Pruitt about his contacts with conservative political commentator Hugh Hewitt over a polluted California site. POLITICO first reported that EPA added the Orange County North Basin site to Pruitt's list of sites targeted for "immediate and intense" action just weeks after Hewitt arranged a meeting with Pruitt and his law firm.

But Pruitt said the agency had been discussing potential action on the Superfund site "well before" Hewitt arranged a meeting on the issue. "I'm not entirely sure why there would be criticism around us taking concerted action to address Superfund sites and get accountability — whomever brings that to our attention," he said.

That didn't placate Udall.

"The idea is that here's been scientific analysis and through analysis on the list, and then special friends get to get on the list that's been created by the agency," Udall said. "Looks a little bit fishy to me."

Udall, who called on Pruitt to resign because of the recent controversies, said Pruitt was unfit to lead the agency because he didn't believe in its mission to protect human health and the environment.

"It needs to be said that your tenure at the EPA is a betrayal of the American people," he said, criticizing not just the ethics scandals, but also his regulatory rollbacks.

"This isn't cooperative federalism, it's flat-out abandonment," he said.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/senate-democrats-press-trump-administration-on-chemicals-report-1232552>

Senate Democrats press Trump administration on chemicals report

By Annie Snider, 5/16/18, 1:39 PM

Eleven Senate Democrats are calling on the Trump administration today to release a scientific assessment of a groups of chemicals that POLITICO reported Monday the White House and EPA officials sought to block.

"If this report is accurate and administration officials sought to suppress release of critical public health information in the interest of avoiding a 'public relations nightmare,' it is an unacceptable failure of leadership and a failure to protect public health," the lawmakers wrote in letters to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, HHS Secretary Alex Azar, Defense Secretary James Mattis and Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney.

The Democrats, led by New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, demanded the release of all internal documents relating to the buried report. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (N.Y.) and Environment and Public Works Committee ranking member Tom Carper (Del.) and Appropriations Committee ranking member Patrick Leahy (Vt.) were among the letter's signatories.

Pruitt told a Senate Appropriations panel today that he did not know his staff had intervened with the chemical assessment.

"I was not aware that there had been some holding back of the report. I think it is important to have all information in the marketplace," Pruitt said in response to questions from West Virginia Republican Sen. Shelley Moore Capito whose state has struggled with contamination from the chemicals.

WHAT'S NEXT: Pruitt is hosting a "leadership summit" on the issue of perfluorinated chemicals at EPA next week.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/article/2018/05/pruitt-says-he-was-unaware-of-interference-with-hhs-chemical-study-1230991>

Pruitt says he was unaware of interference with HHS chemical study

By Annie Snider, 5/16/18, 11:13 AM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said he did not know that his staff had worked to block a scientific assessment of a hot-button class of chemicals.

"I was not aware that there had been some holding back of the report. I think it is important to have all information in the marketplace," Pruitt said in response to tough questioning from West Virginia Republican Sen. Shelley Moore Capito.

Capito pressed Pruitt at a Senate hearing today to "encourage this information to come forward" before an EPA summit on the chemicals next week.

"I appreciate the fact that you are trying to reach the scientific limit that would impact any kind of health impacts in our areas, regardless of who has to remediate and what the remediation costs are going to be," she said, alluding to the fact that cleanup requirements would create major costs for the Defense Department and chemicals manufacturers. Concerns about those impacts were raised by a White House staffer in internal emails, POLITICO reported on Monday.

Pruitt said that the option of regulating the chemicals PFOA and PFOS under the Safe Drinking Water Act remains on the table, along with the option of listing it as a hazardous substance for the purposes of Superfund cleanups.

"We need to take concrete action to address these things," Pruitt said.

EPA has not regulated a new drinking water contaminant in more than two decades, after Congress set new scientific and financial justification requirements. Rural groups and some states oppose setting a legal limit for PFAS chemicals.

Betsy Southerland, the former EPA career staffer who led work on a 2016 drinking water advisory for the chemicals before resigning from EPA last year, told POLITICO Tuesday that the agency had decided not to issue drinking water advisories for additional PFAS chemicals, let alone set a regulation.

Washington Post

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-white-house-looks-secretive-and-uncaring-about-americans-health/2018/05/15/063c21d2-5873-11e8-b656-a5f8c2a9295d_story.html?utm_term=.eed5fbca8b4d

The White House looks secretive and uncaring about Americans' health (*Editorial)

By The Editorial Board, 5/15/18, 7:39 PM

"THE PUBLIC, media, and Congressional reaction to these numbers is going to be huge," a White House staffer wrote in a newly revealed email, calling the release of a new Department of Health and Human Services study a "potential public relations nightmare." After the White House forwarded the staffer's email to the Environmental Protection Agency, which also oversees the chemical industry and consulted with HHS, the study was suppressed and remains unpublished. Meanwhile, communities across the country may be exposed to unhealthful levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, chemicals linked to thyroid conditions, weakened immune systems, developmental defects and other health problems.

Now the email is out, even as the HHS report remains under wraps, and the administration looks both secretive and uncaring about Americans' health.

At issue are chemicals known as PFAS, which were used for decades in nonstick coatings and firefighting foam. Though they are being phased out, these chemicals linger in the environment and in human tissue, and in sufficient amounts they can do serious damage. PFAS water contamination has been detected in communities near military bases, where firefighting foam was used, adjacent to industrial plants and in other areas.

The EPA found in 2016 that PFAS drinking-water concentrations above 70 parts per trillion are dangerous. Health and Human Services experts were poised to conclude that the threshold for concern should be much, much lower. A lower threshold would spur communities concerned about the risks of living near major installations to do more to protect their residents. It would also cost money, raising cleanup costs for the Defense Department and at toxic civilian sites,

and cause public concern. Since the White House staffer's email warning of PR blowback circulated around the Trump administration, the HHS report has sat unpublished for months, according to a Politico report this week.

The White House Office of Management and Budget, where the email appears to have originated, did not respond to a request for an explanation. For his part, EPA Chief of Staff Ryan Jackson argued that his agency is trying to "ensure that the federal government is responding in a uniform way to our local, state, and Congressional constituents and partners." Getting government scientists on the same page about the dangers of PFAS would be good, but it is not worth holding back alarming conclusions about a serious public-health issue. Mr. Jackson's reasoning also does not explain the White House's apparent preoccupation with optics rather than science.

The EPA stressed that it is holding a conference on PFAS next week, at which the chemicals' risk profile will be addressed. That's good. Before that happens, HHS should finally release its report so the participants will have as informed a discussion as possible.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2018/05/leahy-blasts-pruitt-over-epa-meddling-in-chemical-study-1230440>

Leahy blasts Pruitt over EPA meddling in chemical study

By Annie Snider, 5/16/18, 10:25 AM

The top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee blasted EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt for his agency's meddling with an HHS report on the dangers of toxic chemicals contaminating water supplies across the country.

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) called efforts by the White House and political officials at EPA to block the assessment of perfluorinated chemicals "unconscionable," pointing to a community in his state that is grappling with contamination of that chemical.

"It's incomprehensible to the people in Bennington and in Vermont why an agency that works for them — their tax dollars are paying for it — whose charge it is to protect their health, turns their back on them and tries to hide health dangers," Leahy said in an opening statement.

POLITICO reported Monday on internal emails that show Trump administration officials called the chemicals assessment "a potential public relations nightmare," since it was poised to detail health risks at lower levels of exposure than EPA has previously said was safe. Pruitt's chief of staff, Ryan Jackson, told POLITICO he spoke with his counterpart at HHS and the head of the subagency working on the report about the issue.

Leahy said the administration's intervention with the study has shaken Americans' trust in their government.

"Your toxic agenda to make the United States more polluted and less safe has extended beyond environmental policy and actually affected the confidence the American people should have in their government," he said.

Politico

<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/05/16/pruitt-chemical-study-epa-590947>

EPA move on chemical study may trip up Pruitt

By Annie Snider, 5/16/18, 8:07 AM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is facing a new controversy over chemical contamination that could prove even more damaging than his spate of recent ethics scandals.

When Pruitt returns to Capitol Hill Wednesday, he will likely be asked to explain why EPA helped to bury a federal study that would have increased warnings about toxic chemicals found in hundreds of water supplies across the country. A handful of Republicans were quick to demand answers after POLITICO reported Monday that senior aides to Pruitt intervened after the White House warned of a "public relations nightmare" from the impending Health and Human Services Department assessment.

While Pruitt has said partisan witch hunts are to blame for the controversies around his first-class travel, extensive security spending and friendliness with lobbyists, he will struggle to make the same case this time. Emails released under the Freedom of Information Act indicate the HHS study was being prepared for release in January, before EPA intervened. It has not been made public more than three months later, and the agency producing it says it has no timeline for doing so.

Long used in Teflon and firefighting foam, the chemicals PFOA and PFOS are linked with certain cancers, thyroid problems and life-threatening pregnancy complications. Studies have found them in 98 percent of Americans' blood, and communities from West Virginia to Michigan to New York have been in an uproar after discovering that their drinking water has been contaminated with the chemicals.

Tristan Brown, who served as the Obama administration's liaison between EPA and members of Congress when the agency issued a health advisory for PFOA and PFOS in 2016, said that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are deeply concerned about the issue. He said anger over the Trump administration's interference could snowball if powerful Republicans who have experienced contamination in their states speak out strongly.

"That could be the beginning of a breach of the dam," Brown said.

Already, key Senate Republicans have shown their willingness to break with the Trump administration when it comes to chemical contamination. In December, North Carolina's two Republican senators came out in opposition to the administration's nominee to head EPA's chemical safety office, industry consultant Michael Dourson, in part because of a crisis in their home state with a chemical similar to PFOA and PFOS, called GenX.

At least three Republican lawmakers have joined a host of Democrats in demanding answers from the Trump administration about the HHS study.

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, which experienced a major chemical spill a few years ago and has a major PFOA and PFOS problem, said she wants to see the study made public.

"It's important that the findings of the study are released so we can determine the health impacts and any potential threats our communities may face as a result of exposure to perfluorinated chemicals. I would encourage the administration to look into this matter," Capito, a member of the Appropriations subcommittee with EPA jurisdiction, where Pruitt will testify Wednesday, said in a statement to POLITICO.

Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio), who chairs a House Armed Services subcommittee, chimed in as well.

"This is not an issue of public relations — this is an issue of public health and safety," he said in a statement Tuesday after writing to Pruitt on the matter.

"It would be unacceptable if the political considerations of those at the highest levels of the EPA led to the suppression of information concerning the public health of Americans," Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.) said in a statement. "The EPA must provide my constituents with answers to these allegations immediately."

"It is vital that there are proper measures in place to perform accurate, expeditious, scientific assessments for chemicals that pose a threat to public health," he said in a statement to POLITICO, citing his state's "tragic history" with chemical contamination.

Pruitt says he is taking the chemicals issue seriously. Not long after the North Carolina senators torpedoed the chemicals nominee, Pruitt announced a "leadership summit" on PFOA, PFOS and related chemicals that is scheduled to be held at EPA headquarters next week.

But few are expecting his response to include any new regulatory action.

EPA has not regulated a single new contaminant under the Safe Drinking Water Act in more than two decades. The agency's 2016 drinking water advisory only provided advice to the states and local water managers — it set no mandatory limits.

And Pruitt's EPA doesn't even plan to go that far for other chemicals. The agency's No. 2 water official, Dennis Lee Forsgren, has told drinking water groups that under Pruitt, the agency won't issue any new health advisories for GenX or other chemicals.

Betsy Southerland, a career staffer who led work on the 2016 health advisory as director of science and technology at EPA's water office before resigning last year, said states would have to translate the information provided by EPA about the chemicals into health advisory levels or drinking water limits on their own, something few are equipped to do.

Pruitt's "not allowing EPA to provide the state with that expertise," she said.

EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox, defending the agency's approach, said officials are "stressing that all options — not just health advisories — are on the table as we move into the National Leadership Summit and taking additional steps to address PFAS."

E&E Greenwire

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2018/05/16/stories/1060081865>

Pruitt quietly advances planned regulatory overhaul

By Maxine Joselow, 5/16/18

While EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's "secret science" plan has garnered a good deal of publicity and criticism, another proposal that could transform the agency's rulemaking process has largely flown under the radar.

EPA last month quietly submitted a proposal titled "Increasing Consistency and Transparency in Considering Costs and Benefits in the Rulemaking Process" to the White House Office of Management and Budget.

The proposal is in the prerule stage and is under standard review at the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. EPA has not yet published a draft version.

Like the "secret science" plan, this proposal could have profound consequences for EPA's overall approach to assessing the need for new or stiffer regulations to protect public health and the environment.

But while the "secret science" plan would restrict the types of studies that can be used in crafting new regulations, this proposal would improve the cost-benefit analyses that provide the economic justification for new rules.

An EPA spokeswoman told E&E News, "While we do not comment on the substance of an action under formal interagency review, the agency is seeking to provide consistency and certainty in the way EPA calculates costs and benefits of its regulations." She declined to answer a list of emailed questions.

According to the site Reginfo.gov, EPA has already held meetings on the proposal with three industry groups: the American Petroleum Institute, American Forest & Paper Association and National Association of Manufacturers.

The three powerful trade associations regularly weigh in on environmental regulations. For instance, API has been a vocal opponent of the renewable fuel standard, while NAM has repeatedly urged EPA to reform its New Source Review permitting program.

All three groups were tight-lipped about the meetings.

API spokesman Reid Porter said in an email, "API regularly engages with members at all levels of the administration on public policies that will strengthen our country and benefit all American workers, consumers and the environment." He declined to comment further.

A spokeswoman for AF&PA said Paul Noe, the lobbyist who was listed as attending an April 25 meeting with EPA, was unavailable for an interview. She declined to answer emailed questions.

NAM didn't respond to multiple emails seeking comment.

When contacted for this article, regulatory policy experts at progressive organizations said they hadn't heard of the proposal, but once they learned of it, they grew concerned.

"I think it's just another way to put their thumb on the scale and rig how benefits are counted for EPA regulations," said Yogin Kothari, Washington representative with the Union of Concerned Scientists' Center for Science and Democracy.

"This, of course, is all window dressing for: (1) justifying weaker regulations and (2) wasting agency resources," James Goodwin, a senior policy analyst with the Center for Progressive Reform, said in an email.

'Justify whatever ends it wants'

In order to justify the repeal of major rules — defined as those that have an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more — agencies must find that their costs outweigh their benefits.

Environmentalists have previously expressed concern that in its zeal for implementing President Trump's deregulatory agenda, EPA has downplayed the benefits of rules in favor of emphasizing the compliance costs (Greenwire, Jan. 26).

For example, EPA's proposal to ax the Clean Power Plan suggested the rule's climate benefits could be about \$20 billion less annually than the Obama administration contended, while the compliance costs could be about \$20 billion more annually than previous estimates.

"I think the Clean Power Plan cost-benefit analysis — and the difference of opinion between this administration and the previous administration — shows that cost-benefit analysis is a means for any administration to justify whatever end it wants," Kothari said. "This administration is using it to roll back and weaken a lot of science-based safeguards."

And EPA's proposal to repeal the Clean Water Rule maintained the previously calculated costs but reduced the benefits by 85 to 90 percent (Greenwire, July 7, 2017).

'Consistent best practices'

Regulatory policy experts at conservative organizations, meanwhile, expressed cautious optimism that the proposal would introduce more consistency into the rulemaking process.

"We need to look closer at how [cost-benefit analyses] are being done and establish some consistent best practices," said Diane Katz, senior research fellow in regulatory policy at the Heritage Foundation.

James Broughel, a research fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, said, "Whether or not what the Trump administration proposes is going to be a step in the right direction or not, I don't know. But I think movement toward more consistency and more transparency is clearly a good idea."

He added, "Up until the Trump administration, most of the air quality regulations tended to include estimates of co-benefits. So they could be trying to introduce more consistency into how these co-benefits are accounted for."

Susan Dudley, who served as OIRA administrator during the George W. Bush administration, said she would reserve her judgment for when the draft text becomes available.

"It's under review at OIRA now, and I really don't know what to expect from it," said Dudley, who now heads the George Washington University Regulatory Studies Center, in an email.

"It's unusual to write a rulemaking to guide internal agency regulatory analysis," she added. "I will be very interested to read it when OIRA concludes review!"

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/387978-pruitt-advisers-pan-science-transparency-proposal>

Pruitt advisers pan science 'transparency' proposal

By Timothy Cama, 5/16/18, 1:11 PM

A team of external scientific advisers to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) head Scott Pruitt is criticizing his proposal to restrict the scientific findings that the agency can use in writing and enforcing regulations.

The critique, posted Tuesday to the EPA's website, comes from a working group of the Science Advisory Board, a panel of experts — some of whom Pruitt hand-picked — charged with evaluating the EPA's science and regulatory actions.

Pruitt rolled out the controversial proposal last month in what he said was an effort to improve transparency at the agency and increase scrutiny. In general, studies used by the EPA would have to fully disclose their data and methodology.

"The American people ought to be able to have confidence, assurance, that the findings, the record that we build ... can be assessed, it can be evaluated, it can be analyzed," Pruitt said.

Critics say the proposal is merely an attempt to make it harder for the EPA to be aggressive in its regulatory, enforcement and other actions.

In their memo dated last week, the 10 advisers to Pruitt said that the proposal doesn't adequately explain why it's necessary. They also warned that it would remove valuable scientific studies from the EPA's consideration, among other issues.

"Although the proposed rule cites several valuable publications that support enhanced transparency, the precise design of the rule appears to have been developed without a public process for soliciting input from the scientific community," the advisers wrote.

"Nor does the preamble to the rule describe precisely how the proposal builds on previous efforts to promote transparency such as the Information Quality Act and EPA's Information Quality Guidelines."

The group also took issue with the EPA's decision not to evaluate the impact of the proposal on regulatory programs.

"Without access to the restricted data, regulatory programs could become more or less stringent than they otherwise would be, with consequences for both regulatory costs and benefits," they said.

The advisers said the proposal could put epidemiological studies off the table for EPA and oversimplifies objections based on personal privacy of study subjects.

The group additionally said the EPA did not give them adequate notice that the proposal was coming.

An EPA spokeswoman said the agency will consider the input.

"We value the Board's expertise, and we welcome feedback from the chartered panel on areas in which they are interested in getting additional scientific information that is relevant to the rulemaking process," the spokeswoman said.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/387859-house-committee-votes-to-cut-epa-budget>

House lawmakers vote to give modest budget cuts to EPA, Interior

By Miranda Green, 5/15/18, 6:52 PM

House lawmakers voted Tuesday night to give modest budget cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Interior Department.

The bipartisan bill voted out of committee by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies provides the Interior Department with \$13 billion and the EPA with \$8 billion for fiscal 2019. It gives \$35.2 billion in total to fund Interior, EPA and other similar agencies.

Agencies and programs in the bill weathered far fewer cuts to its budget than originally suggested by the White House budget proposed in February — with the overall budget level landing at \$7 billion more than requested. The budget for the Interior Department was more than \$1 billion higher than the White House's proposed \$11.7 billion budget.

The EPA's budget would be cut by a proposed \$100 million. The bill also includes a number of riders that would affect wildlife conservation.

Chairman Ken Calvert (R-Calif.) said the reductions to EPA largely focused on cuts to "search and regulatory programs." The bill cuts many of the agency's regulatory programs by \$228 million below the current enacted level.

Environmental and wildlife conservationists opposed the bill due to a number of riders that would strip protections for species and the environment, including one that would take away federal protections on wolves in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, and strip Endangered Species Act protections for wolves in Wyoming. Another aims to repeal EPA's Clean Water Rule.

"When at first you don't succeed at endangering America's air, water, land and wildlife, try, try again by hiding anti-environmental riders deep in a must-pass federal appropriations bill," Martin Hayden, vice president of Policy and Legislation for Earthjustice said in a statement Tuesday. "These giveaways for wealthy corporate polluters couldn't pass as standalone bills which is why House leaders bury them in spending bills, hoping Americans aren't paying attention while Congress gives away the store."

Nevertheless, environmentalists were relieved to see funding remain for key programs, which were whittled down in the White House proposal.

The subcommittee's bill stopped short of severely cutting back on Interior's Land Water Conservation Fund, which moves some funding from offshore oil drilling royalties into land conservation and public land access efforts. The department's proposed budget for fiscal 2019 suggested cutting the program by roughly 90 percent.

"The House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee's funding bill released today rejected the Trump Administration's harmful and dangerous proposal to decimate America's most important conservation and recreation program, the LWC," Tom Cors, director of government relations for lands at The Nature Conservancy, said in a statement. "The Subcommittee bill wisely recognizes the vital importance of LWCF, which the Administration proposed effectively to wipe out."

At the markup of the bill Tuesday, ranking member Betty McCollum (D-Minn.) objected to the inclusion of the riders she said "would undermine clean air and clean water standards, put the health and safety of American families at risk and roll back protections for endangered species."

"I do not understand why the majority continues to impose riders on these bills in the appropriations process rather than bring them to the floor and vote on them with full transparency," she said.

Additionally, she took aim at EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt specifically, chastising members for not including direct messaging in the bill that reprimanded Pruitt for spending taxpayer money Congress did not allot to him to build his \$43,000 soundproof booth.

"The EPA has yet to provide the committee with the statutory-required Anti Deficiency Act report regarding this violation. This is not an isolated case of the financial abuse of EPA leadership," McCollum said.

She called again for Pruitt to resign.

Washington Examiner

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/epa-california-officials-meet-on-fuel-efficiency-rules>

EPA, California officials meet on fuel-efficiency rules

By John Siciliano, 5/16/18, 12:17 PM

The Environmental Protection Agency is meeting with California officials this week in Washington to negotiate the creation of a national fuel efficiency standard after the state sued the Trump administration over its proposed easing of the rules.

"We think changes need to be made, and we have started a dialogue with the state of California," EPA air chief Bill Wehrum told the House Energy and Commerce Committee Wednesday.

"And in fact, as we speak, are trying to set up the next discussion with our colleagues at [the California Air Resources Board] for Wednesday," he said. "They are going to be here for meetings this week, and we're hoping to get to meet with them while they are here in town."

California sued the administration preemptively for trying to develop "one national standard" for fuel efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions in cars and light trucks. The EPA for decades has accommodated California's more stringent car rules by granting it a waiver, allowing it and other states to follow California rules while abiding by EPA's separate standards.

President Trump, in talks with automakers last week, directed the EPA to try to work out a deal with California.

Wehrum said that does not mean that the administration is backtracking on its push for a national standard, but shows some changes are needed to the rule.

"To the degree the press reports are saying that's not a goal, I would say that's wrong," Wehrum said when prodded by Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich.

"But I would say is we think changes need to be made," he said.

Dingle said she was confused by conflicted media reports that first said the administration would work with California in pursuit of one national standard, but then reported Tuesday that the agency would not.

She said the auto industry needs stability on the fuel economy standards.

Wall Street Journal

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-administration-wont-consult-california-on-vehicle-emissions-rules-1526414007?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=1>

Trump Administration Won't Consult California on Vehicle Emissions Rules

By Timothy Puko and Mike Spector, 5/15/18, 3:53 PM

WASHINGTON—The Trump administration doesn't intend to give any special treatment or outreach to California while it drafts new federal rules on vehicle emissions, according to people familiar with the matter.

President Donald Trump had suggested last week that his team would work on a deal with the state, and past federal overhauls have included advanced collaboration with California, which has unique power to police vehicle pollution. But Mr. Trump's Environmental Protection Agency is sticking with a plan to finalize its proposal before taking input from the state, the people said.

The strategy is likely to disappoint auto makers hoping to head off a brewing conflict they fear could result in two sets of environmental rules for cars and trucks in the U.S. Just days ago executives from the world's biggest auto makers emerged from a White House meeting touting Mr. Trump's "openness" to expedited talks with California.

The administration's strategy hasn't changed in response to the meeting, the people said.

Washington and Sacramento have been heading toward a face-off because of opposing views on vehicle emissions standards.

The administration wants to drastically ease tightened Obama-era emissions targets. But California has a special waiver to set higher standards than the federal government, and a dozen states follow its lead. California is also encouraging the production of more zero-emission vehicles such as electric cars to slow climate change.

Mr. Trump's team has made only a tentative outreach so far, and EPA leaders don't plan to make any more or share any technical details with California before advancing their proposal in the weeks to come, the people said.

The administration is sticking with a plan to propose several new options—which include ways to eliminate California's special authority—and then use that to create negotiating room with the state. U.S. officials intend on only taking input from California once the plan opens to comments from everyone, the people said.

California is already suing to stop the administration's overhaul. California and the states following its rules make up more than one-third of the U.S. car market, and if they break from Washington to pursue conflicting regulations, it could wreak havoc on design and business plans auto makers map out years in advance.

That fear in part led auto makers to meet with Mr. Trump and several of his senior advisers at the White House on Friday. Mr. Trump began the meeting by threatening litigation against California, but in an about-face, later in the meeting said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao would be tasked with striking a deal with California.

"Trying to project where and how this goes is tricky, but the politics is much more challenging than the actual substance," said Mitch Bainwol, head of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, a Washington lobbying group representing auto makers including General Motors Co. , Ford Motor Co. and Toyota Motor Corp. "There is no reason why [Mr. Trump] can't find common ground with California. There's a win here for everyone and it's now game time."

The issue could come up for Mr. Pruitt Wednesday morning during a budget hearing on Capitol Hill. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D., Calif.) is on the appropriations subcommittee that hosts Mr. Pruitt starting at 9:30 a.m.

Industry representatives had been hopeful after Friday's meeting, thinking an agreement with California remained possible, even if discussions don't kick off soon. Despite months of discussions between the White House, EPA, Transportation Department and California officials that haven't resulted in a deal, auto makers remain convinced the process of revising the regulations remains in early stages, said a person familiar with last week's meeting. A rule-making process that solicits comments gives auto makers and California officials an opportunity to weigh in, this person said. Auto makers don't view California's lawsuit as nixing a later deal on rule changes, this person said.

California Air Resources Board Chairwoman Mary Nichols told The Wall Street Journal in April that a lawsuit against the Trump administration over the emissions-rules revisions would partly be designed to preserve legal rights and wouldn't foreclose a later settlement.

Still, discussion so far haven't resulted in any substantive agreements on changes, and, in some instances, have proved logistically difficult. Ms. Nichols and other California officials visited the White House in January to discuss possible revisions to the rules, but bureaucratic snafus prevented them from entering the building. As a result, they left with Trump administration officials to a nearby coffee shop to hold talks, according to people familiar with the matter.

Meanwhile, the negotiations' point person on the White House's National Economic Council, Michael Catanzaro, has recently left. Mr. Catanzaro contacted California's Ms. Nichols in September to discuss including her agency in discussions on potential changes to vehicle-emissions regulations, a move that kick-started talks in the ensuing months. That outreach came after California officials said they have been sidelined while discussions took place among auto-industry representatives and Trump administration officials.

BNA

http://esweb.bna.com/eslw/display/no_alpha.adp?mode=si&frag_id=134166811&item=408&prod=deln&cat=AGENCY

EPA May Invite Hazard, Exposure Data on Dozens of Chemicals

By Pat Rizzuto, 5/16/18

The EPA may invite chemical manufacturers and others to submit toxicity and exposure information on dozens of chemicals already on its radar for potential scrutiny.

"EPA is considering opening dockets for these chemicals in order to collect relevant information needed for prioritization and risk evaluation," the agency said May 14 in an emailed response to questions that Bloomberg Environment submitted.

If a chemical is deemed to pose an unreasonable risk, the Toxic Substances Control Act amendments of 2016 require the EPA to take regulatory or other actions to prevent those risks.

About 80 chemicals are on what the Environmental Protection Agency calls its work plan list.

TSCA requires the agency to use its work plan list to decide which chemicals to evaluate for public health and environmental risks. The reasoning was this list includes chemicals, such as lead, that have toxic or other concerning characteristics.

Open Dockets, Attorneys Say

"It would be very useful for EPA to open dockets on the work plan chemicals so companies along the value chain can plan for these evaluations by gathering information and evaluating data gaps," Martha E. Marrapese, an attorney with Wiley Rein LLP in Washington, told Bloomberg Environment. "Early information gathering will help the development of science policy around how hazard and exposure will be assessed."

Opening the dockets also would help the EPA meet the statute's tight deadlines, said Marrapese, whose law firm works with chemical manufacturers and companies that purchase chemicals.

The American Chemistry Council also would support the EPA opening dockets on the work plan chemicals, Christina Franz, an attorney with the council, told Bloomberg Environment.

"The information submitted would likely not only inform EPA's ultimate risk evaluations, but also may help inform which work plan chemicals are higher priority for risk evaluation than others," Franz said.

The Washington-based chemistry council is the primary trade association representing chemical manufactures including AkzoNobel NV, Eastman Chemical Co., and W. R. Grace & Co.

Deadlines Approach

The EPA already is evaluating the risks of 10 chemicals from its work plan list.

TSCA requires the agency to select any additional chemicals after a screening process, known as prioritization, that quickly examines their hazards and exposures.

At the end of that process, the agency can designate a chemical in one of two ways: The chemical could either be a high priority for risk evaluation, meaning the EPA must start to assess that chemical within six months, or a low priority, meaning the chemical is set aside unless new information suggests it poses a greater risk than previously realized.

The EPA must begin that screening process early next year to meet one of the statute's many deadlines.

By December 2019, the agency must have identified 20 high-priority and 20 low-priority chemicals.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/387381-pruitts-epa-disregards-the-science-behind-the-clean-air-act>

Pruitt's EPA disregards the science behind the Clean Air Act (*Op-Ed)

By Bernard D. Goldstein, 5/16/18, 11:30 AM

In the name of "cooperative federalism," Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt is out to gut one of the finest examples of cooperative federalism in environmental law — that of setting outdoor air pollutant standards. The basic approach was worked out almost a half-century ago in the 1970 U.S. Clean Air Act, with minimal amendments

since. It calls for the setting of uniform national outdoor standards for some of the worst pollutants, solely based upon the protection of public health with an adequate margin of safety.

These federal standards are necessary to avoid a “race to the bottom” in which states compete to attract industry through providing the weakest health-based standards. Each national standard is reviewed every five years, beginning with an internal scientific compilation and evaluation of the relevant worldwide scientific literature. This and other EPA documents related to the standard are then intensely reviewed by the congressionally-mandated Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee.

CASAC recommends whether the standard should be revised or maintained. If the former, CASAC usually provides a range of numbers about which reasonable scientists might differ, often reminding the administrator that the least stringent number in this range contains no margin of safety. The administrator considers these recommendations, as well as public comments, in deciding upon the final standards.

The Supreme Court, in *Whitman v. American Trucking Associations*, reaffirmed judicial interpretations that EPA can rely only on scientific information relevant to health effects in setting the primary, health-based standards, and not consider economic impacts, nor the health impact of job loss or other social or economic effects of meeting the standard. However, such impacts can be taken into account when the state chooses among options to meet a standard it has exceeded. State implementation plans describing how to achieve the standard require EPA approval, but it is the state that decides whether to, for example, address local industrial emissions or cut down on power plant emissions from upwind regions to meet the standard.

Scientific judgment is an important part of the process. This includes understanding the intersection between exposure and human susceptibility. For example, a favorite industry argument against the ozone standard is that ozone is so reactive that it doesn’t penetrate indoors where people spend most of their time. But ozone is at its highest levels on warm summer days when children are outdoors engaged in active play. Exercise increases breathing rate and depth — and children’s growing lungs are particularly sensitive to the short- and long-term effects of ozone.

Under EPA’s new guidance, CASAC will need to add expertise in economic analysis and in regulatory review as its purview has been expanded. Pruitt undoubtedly will appoint those most sympathetic to industry’s views. Despite their lack of expertise about the direct health impact of air pollutants, their votes on the appropriate level of the allowable standard will carry the same weight as the CASAC members with expertise in toxicology or epidemiology who have been the mainstay of the advisory process.

This new approach to setting primary air quality standards should be judged in conjunction with other major decisions about the incorporation of science into EPA. Pruitt has succeeded in greatly impairing the ability of EPA’s scientific processes, including drastic cuts in the agency’s research budget. He has altered how EPA chooses its advisory committee members in ways that greatly empower industry and industry consultants and lessen the likelihood that a knowledgeable and disinterested academic scientist would be selected. Pruitt’s recent institution of rules requiring the availability of raw data for studies used for regulatory purposes greatly limits the use of the coherent and replicated body of world science supporting air pollution standards.

I was the chair of CASAC early in the Reagan administration. A lawyer from the American Iron and Steel Association insisted that we discontinue one of our meetings, alleging EPA’s failure to appropriately give notice. But the American Petroleum Institute’s lawyer convinced the steel industry’s lawyer to withdraw his objection. He pointed out to his colleague that they wanted the decision made when Anne Gorsuch was EPA administrator.

The game plan has not changed. Scott Pruitt’s changes are not aimed at improving cooperative federalism. They are aimed at devising a process allowing him to move up the setting of the fine particle standard and the accompanying regulatory analysis to just before the end of President Trump’s first term from its 2022 date. One wonders if the White House surmises that Pruitt is not confident in the president’s reelection.

But the biggest impediment to Pruitt's plan is his dependence on a complacent scientific advisory process that will automatically kowtow to his desire to relax well-justified air pollution standards on behalf of his supporters. Perhaps he should not be so confident.

Bernard D. Goldstein, M.D., is a professor emeritus and dean emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. He was chair of the EPA Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee and the Environmental Protection Agency assistant administrator for research and development under President Reagan.

Politico

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/energy/article/2018/05/wrda-faces-stumbling-block-over-small-community-projects-543903>

WRDA faces stumbling block over small community projects

By Annie Snider, 5/15/18, 4:48 PM

A battle over boosting funding for drinking water and wastewater projects in small communities is threatening a bipartisan effort to pass the first major infrastructure bill under the Trump administration.

The measure at issue, Securing Required Funding for Water Infrastructure Now, or SRF WIN Act, would expand the popular WIFIA program that loans federal money for water infrastructure projects at Treasury's attractive long-term interest rates. The bill includes a number of changes seeking to make the WIFIA program more accessible to small and mid-sized communities.

Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) said last week that he supported adding it to this year's Water Resources Development Act, S. 2800 (115), through a manager's amendment. But he said attaching the measure, which was introduced by Sens. John Boozman (R-Ark.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.) and nine others, wasn't a done deal. "We're working to try and get to that," he told reporters.

The SRF measure has sparked fierce opposition from the groups that originally conceived of the WIFIA program that say the new proposal tilts too far toward the small communities, and they are now threatening to revoke their support from the overall infrastructure bill if it gets added.

"We believe that SRF WIN Act is a fundamentally flawed proposal that, if enacted, would pose a severe threat to the future viability of the WIFIA program," the American Water Works Association, the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies and the Water Environment Federation wrote in a letter to Senate EPW leaders last week.

The fight pits small and rural communities against larger communities whose projects can often run into the billions of dollars.

The WIFIA program, authorized as part of the 2014 WRDA bill, targets those larger-scale projects, in part because they have a harder time competing for money from the State Revolving Funds, the main federal funding mechanism for municipal water projects. Those funds prioritize spending in areas with public health problems, and some states have capped the amount that can go to larger projects so they don't drain the funds.

The groups opposing the new measure argue that small and rural communities already have access to a carve-out that gives them 15 percent of WIFIA funding. The proposed changes, they say, would put larger communities at an unfair disadvantage and could ultimately lead to the demise of EPA's State Revolving Funds program.

EPA estimates that \$472.6 billion will be needed over the next two decades to improve drinking water infrastructure, alone. The federal government funds just a fraction of that — most years Congress appropriates less than \$3 billion.

Beyond the rural carve-out under WIFIA, states can also bundle smaller projects together to reach the \$20 million minimum funding requirement, and EPA recently conditionally approved one such application from the Indiana Finance Authority.

The changes being proposed in the SRF WIN Act seek to make this option more accessible, including by waiving the \$100,000 application fee for states filing such applications and authorizing \$200 million annually to go toward such projects.

"This legislation is an innovative approach to helping communities of all sizes, in every state secure loans so they can improve their crumbling infrastructure," Boozman said in a statement introducing the legislation.

Dozens of groups have endorsed including the SRF WIN Act in the Senate's WRDA bill, called America's Water Infrastructure Act, including the Chamber of Commerce, the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Vinyl Institute.

"We believe the inclusion of the SRF WIN Act in the America's Water Infrastructure Act will make a really good bill even better," more than 25 groups wrote in a letter to Senate EPW leaders on Tuesday.

But the opposing groups argue that Boozman's bill would decrease the program's leveraging rate — an aspect that has been wildly popular with lawmakers since it allows small appropriations to fund much larger infrastructure investments. EPA expects that the \$25 million it got for WIFIA in fiscal 2017 will result in \$2.3 billion worth of loans, the groups said.

"These robust rates enable the federal government to get a tremendous 'bang for the buck' when appropriating funds for water and wastewater infrastructure," AWWA, AMWA and WEF wrote.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is seeking to move its WRDA bill swiftly. It will hold its second legislative hearing on the measure Thursday, with the assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works due to testify. Barrasso said a markup will be held shortly thereafter.

AP

<https://apnews.com/4a84ff1649e14bd9be4b9b38e434199e/50-truckloads-of-soil-removed-from-Montana-oil-spill-site>

50 truckloads of soil removed from Montana oil spill site

5/16/18

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Crews have removed about 1,435 tons (1,302 metric tons) of soil that became contaminated by an oil spill on the Fort Peck Reservation.

The Billings Gazette reports that the spill was discovered April 27. More than 50 large dump trucks full of soil have been removed from the site so far, with more to come.

The Environmental Protection Agency is overseeing the cleanup for the reservation.

The well that the spill came from had been shut down and was last inspected in December.

It's believed that the wellhead froze and cracked over the winter. The crack leaked an estimated 90,000 barrels of brine with 600 barrels of crude oil. The spill was discovered by a rancher flying his plane over the remote area.